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2019

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IE Revista de Investigación Educativa de la REDIECH, 10(19), pp. 299-312.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.33010/ie_rie_rediech.v10i19.710
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DE LA EPISTEMOLOGÍA NARRATIVA ZAPATISTA A LA ACADEMIA CUAUHTLI; ESTUDIANTES LATINOAMERICANOS

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Abstract

In this article, I will briefly describe how a group of Mexican American and Mexican female middle school students in Guadalajara, Mexico wrote poems with the aim of sharing their reflections with students who attend the Academia Cuauhtli in Austin, Texas. Drawing from the Zapatista narrative epistemology, and the method of grasping epistemological insights from poetry in education, the poems were grouped in categories to analyze the transnational effort of the Academia Cuauhtli between Mexico and the United States in the context of building a great transnational homeland for all colonized Latinxs throughout Latinx-America.¹

Keywords: Zapatista narrative epistemology, Latinx-American students, Academia Cuauhtli, Texas, Guadalajara.

Resumen

En este artículo describiré brevemente cómo un grupo de estudiantes mexicanos y mexicanas de secundaria en Guadalajara, México, escribió poemas con el objetivo de compartir sus reflexiones con los estudiantes que asisten a la Academia Cuauhtli, en Austin, Texas. A partir de la

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epistemología narrativa zapatista, y el método de captar las percepciones epistemológicas de la poesía en educación, los poemas se agruparon en categorías para analizar el esfuerzo transnacional de la Academia Cuauhtli entre México y Estados Unidos en el contexto de la construcción de una gran patria transnacional para todos los “latinx” colonizados en toda América Latina.

Palabras clave: epistemología narrativa zapatista, estudiantes latinoamericanos, Academia Cuauhtli, Texas, Guadalajara.

**Introduction**

Narrative epistemology is a necessary foundation in education because stories are themselves ways of knowing. The dichotomy between pre-literate narratives vs. literate Western narratives has obscured the importance of narrative epistemology in the construction of knowledge. Therefore, there is an epistemological discrimination when only well-known Western narratives are taken into consideration (Lienhard, 1990, León Portilla, 1956, 1964 & 1996). In education, some studies show how teachers can use poems in elementary school curriculum to address environmental problems (Eigenbrod, 2010). Some other points out the importance of incorporating indigenous children’s literature in curriculum to enhance students’ and teachers’ awareness of others understandings about nature and place (Korteweg, Gonzalez and Guillet, 2009; Seale & Beverly, 2006). Given that one of the Critical Race Theory’s themes on education is rescuing the centrality of experiential knowledge (Yosso & Solórzano, 2001), using minority student narratives within school’s curricula can helps in the process of analyzing local schooling practices that reveal the undergirding racism within typical education. The use of narratives also enables students and teachers to reflect on their lived experience within the racial educational system (Fernández, 2002).

What is clear is that the erasure of narratives is part of the epistemicidios (epistemicide), in other words, narratives are crucial in the war on knowledge (De Sousa Santos, 2009; Lienhard, 1990). Since narratives represent a key element in the historical process of liberation of the oppressed, those narratives from the Mexican American and Mexican students are foundational in the narrative epistemology of liberation. This essay describes how a group of Mexican American and Mexican female middle school students in Mexico wrote poems to share their reflections with some other students from the Academia Cuauhtli in Austin, Texas, since the goal is disrupting the mono-lingual and mono-cultural perspective on narratives, I incorporated Zapatista narrative epistemology as a method of grasping epistemological knowledge from poetry in education. Specifically, I created a connection between the Zapatista metaphor of La defensa zapatista girl and the Mexican-American and Mexican girl’s poems to bring out how important it is for those middle school students growing up without fear, as La defensa zapatista states. This essay addresses
the importance of incorporating the Mexican-American and Mexican students as Latinx-American peripheral creators of knowledge that the Western canon does not validate due to epistemological racism.

**Zapatista narrative epistemology**

The epistemological breakthrough that enabled Zapatista narrative knowledge to gain a place within qualitative research has been a difficult process. Historically, narrative knowledge can be traced back to the way in which indigenous peoples of the world have made sense of reality over millennia (Lienhard, 1990; Dussel, 2007).

The epistemological division between what was considered knowledge and what was thought as folklore is the major turning point for Western epistemology: Knowledge is placed before and above being (Grosfoguel, 2008). The euphoria over the postmodern and postcolonial theoretical strand enabled qualitative researchers to realize that narrative and oral methodologies had existed as ancestral ways of knowing since the beginning of time.

In the case of Latin America, the genocide committed by the Spanish, English, and Portuguese empires inaugurated “the long night of more of 500 years”, as the Zapatistas describes it. After the fifteenth century, narratives and oral ways of knowing were captured by the *indigenista* work of *cronistas* such as Bartolomé de las Casas, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, Fray Toribio de Benavente, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Guamán Poma de Ayala, and several others. In this way, even though in the Western tradition of thought, the predecessor of today’s narrative research is the Chicago School of sociologists from the 1920s and 1930s (Chase, 2010). I argue that Indigenous peoples of the world are the predecessors of narrative and oral ways to grasp reality even before *cronistas* and Chicago School sociologists.

Since the Zapatista uprising of 1994, narratives and orality struggle for being more than only accessory methodological techniques in order to be recognized as specific ways of being, knowing, and inquiry. Since 1994 until today, the Zapatista narrative epistemology based on decolonial epistemologies emerged as a distinctive framework to approach social research. The Zapatista narrative epistemology is the result of an immense corpus of narratives: The Declarations of the Lacandon Jungle, all the Zapatista communiqués, the endless narrative production from the EZLN through Enlace Zapatista, not to mention the narrative production just from Sub Comandante Marcos-Galeano (*Muertos incómodos –with Paco Ignacio Taibo II*, *Relatos del Viejo Antonio, Don Durito de la Lacandona, La historia del león y el espejo, Habrá una Vez-relatos sobre Niña Defensa Zapatista*, etc.). What is important is to point out is the extent to which those narratives are not just literary production, but rather, a distinctive epistemological foundation that enables Zapatistas to propose a significant intellectual framework: Zapatista narrative epistemology uses metaphors as intellectual means to build philosophical arguments and therefore those metaphors are not just literary figures. As Goodall emphasizes, “Narratives are our way of knowing” (2008, p. 15). This idea leads to the notion of narrative epistemology as a special form of reasoning, feeling, and grasping the world. Kramp (2004, p. 106)
explains how “[…] Essential to utilizing narrative inquiry as a method of research is understanding that narrative is a way of knowing”. This happens “By structuring or framing relationships, typically casual, the storyteller translates knowing into telling” (Kramp, 2004, p. 110). I used the Zapatista narrative epistemology framework to analyze the extent to which those poems written by Mexican-American and Mexican female students offer intellectual insights in the transnational relationship between Texas and Guadalajara.

For instance, the story of *La defensa zapatista* is a large metaphor of what it might mean to be a woman without fear:

Miedo porque pequeña, miedo porque grande, miedo porque delgada, miedo porque gorda, miedo porque bonita, miedo porque fea, miedo porque embarazada, miedo porque no embarazada, miedo porque niña, miedo porque joven, miedo porque madura, miedo porque anciana [Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano, 2016, p. 6].

Fear of being small, fear of being big, fear of being thin, fear of being fat, fear of being pretty, fear of being ugly, fear of being pregnant, fear of not being pregnant, fear of being a child, fear of being young, fear of being mature, fear of being an elderly woman [all translations are mine otherwise indicated. Subcomandante insurgente Galeano, 2016, p. 6].

The metaphor of the girl *La defensa zapatista* is not only a literary resource; the metaphor is an epistemological vehicle of knowledge to communicate the Zapatista’s thought on the philosophical, sociological, and political Zapatista agenda. The richness of the Zapatista’s thought is more complicated than their “folkloric” aspect of their practices in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. That is the comfortable epistemological state for the Western canon because in that way the distinction between “serious” theoretical work and “folkloric” practices is kept in benefit of the Western canon. When the Zapatistas’ metaphors are taken into account as “serious” epistemological arguments their work is not “folkloric” anymore and it is theoretically “serious”. It is important to change the perspective that the Zapatistas only resist and do interesting practices of resistance in their struggle for autonomy. They are philosophers, just like Western theorists. Nevertheless, the Zapatistas use other non-Western epistemologies. They use metaphors to communicate their knowledge. In the epistemological path of pre-Columbian poetry, Ramon Xirau, Enrique Dussel’s metaphoric word, Maria Zambrano’s poetic rationale, Ricardo Romo Torres, ethnopoetics, the poetic inquiry from Sandra Faulkner (2019) and Prendergast, Leggo and Sameshima (2009) among many others, the Zapatistas’ narrative epistemology is key in the epistemological path where metaphors and poetic images are means and ends of knowledge.

**Academia Cuauhtli and Latinx-America**

Between the spring and fall of 2015, I had the opportunity of working at the Academia Cuauhtli in Austin, Texas. I attended the weekly meetings of *Nuestro Grupo*, witnessed conversations between the Austin Schools District and Academia Cuauhtli, participated in the “Flor y canto” activity, called parents and invited them to have
their children ready at the bus station to travel to The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC), and assisted staff in Saturday sessions.

From January 2017 to January 2018, I worked with a group of Mexican-American and Mexican middle school students in a poetry workshop in Guadalajara, Jalisco. The goal was to create a transnational collaboration between female Mexican-American and Mexican middle school students from Guadalajara, Mexico and Mexican and Mexican-American students from Austin, Texas.

The female Mexican-American and Mexican students and I did the following activity to collaborate with the Academia Cuauhtli: given that I teach history to those students in Mexico and the subject for that period of time was “Los intentos de colonización del norte” (Attempts to colonize the North) and “La separación de Texas” (The separation/secession of Texas) the students and I used those topics as a context to write the poems. The students read the official textbook about those topics, and as a product, they wrote down some poems with the purpose of sending those poems to the students who regularly attend Academia Cuauhtli in Austin, Texas. The main question that guided the production of their poems was the following: What would you like to say to those students who attend the Academic Cuauhtli in Austin, Texas?

In this essay I speak about the girls that wrote those poems addressing the Zapatista perspective and goal to create a society where women, like the girl Defensa zapatista can grow up without fear. The Zapatista perspective on gender is a huge strand within Zapatismo. I will discuss how the use of narrative epistemology and metaphors (the girl Defensa zapatista is a powerful metaphor on gender) is key to make visible additional concepts and ideas that those students bring up through their poems.

The majority of the students have relatives who have either migrated to the United States or returned to Mexico. Most of them were between 14-15 years old. Their parents’ average income is between 400 and 500 dollars monthly, and they are builders, factory workers, informal traders, etc. The method for selecting participants was the convenience sampling (Dawson & Manderson, 1993). This means that I selected those members of the community of students who I thought would provide me with the best information. The students were asked whether or not they have had one of their parents or relatives living in the U.S. as well as if they have lived in that country. The academic coordinator of the middle school in which I conducted the study signed the authorization to share the students’ poems for academic purposes.

**Methodology: Metaphoric method and the analogic-metaphorical word**

In the following lines I will describe some of the findings and I will quote some of the poems after using the method of grasping epistemological insights from metaphors according to the Mexican philosophers Ramón Xirau and Ricardo Romo Torres (Xirau, 1968, 1975, 1979, and 1997; Romo, 2016) that explains how Latin American poetry contains epistemological spaces that have not been noted by hegemonic thought. In addition to this, I will draw from the analogic word from the perspective of the Mexican philosopher Enrique Dussel (Dussel, 1991).
The metaphoric method is relevant since dominant educational research has dismissed ways of knowing from peoples who have suffered colonial invasions from Western empires.

The origin of the metaphorical epistemology should be found in the Aztec and Mexican philosophy. *Flor y canto* ("flower and song"), the "symbol of the only true" (León-Portilla, 1963, p. 128) before the European invasion, is the first approach to poetic epistemology. According to León Portilla (2019), the Nahuatl philosophy in Mexico clearly addressed the relationship between philosophy and poetry. The *tlamatinime* or philosophers-wise men in Mexico noticed how everything in our lives is transitory (the beauty of flowers, the human body, etc.). If everything is transitory, then nothing stays still, therefore there is no such thing as something solid true. If everything is a transitory true; is there a goal for which it is really worth living? Within that despair, the *tlamatinime*, founded a path to achieve the true: The use of metaphors originated either from the deepest human being’s heart or from within the sky. Using flowers and songs is how human beings can target the true. As León Portilla (2019) found, that Aztec culture of metaphors was aware of how true was an unsolved mystery, but they might not aim to solve that mystery and in that process, at least they felt that beauty was, in fact, the only truth on earth.

When metaphors are included in educational research colonized peoples, marginalized peoples, are taken into account in the “serious” discussion on knowledge. Scholars such as Ramón Xirau (1968, 1975, 1979, 1997) Ricardo Romo Torres (2016), Sandra Faulkner (2019), and Prendergast, Leggo and Sameshima (2009) have elaborated a comprehensive perspective to show the extent to which metaphors are vehicles and expressions of knowledge. For instance, Faulkner (2019) explains how poetry inquiry is a specific form of reasoning that could be a research method, qualitative analysis and representation of meanings as well as powerful research tool. As Prendergast (2009) says, poetic inquiry is an umbrella that covers a huge range of hybridity in alternative types of inquiry. In this article, I especially make use of the methodological approach of metaphoric word from Dussel (1990) and ethnopoetics (Hymes, 1982; Blommaert, 2006; Quick 1999) to study the students’ poems.

The analogic word is about rescuing and listening the revealing narratives from those who survive in colonized territories. Dussel (1991, 201) explains his notion of analogic word in the diagram 1.

In this diagram, Dussel (1991) explains the concept of *analogia verbi*, which is about how the word reveals and not merely expresses, that it is, the revealing word, not merely the expressive word. Therefore, that *analogia verbi* is different than the *analogia nomini* that only names the world.

Xirau (1979) has developed a comprehensive narrative of philosophical perspective that shows how contemporary Latin American poetry is not only a means of expression but also a philosophical ethos that captures forms of knowledge that the Western canon does not validate. Xirau (1971) describes how modernity’s conception of knowledge wanted to be realistic and material, but it is in crisis since the limit of what the West divided in the sixteenth century (what was either considered as modern or not) is not sufficient for even the West today in terms of knowledge. This why Xirau (1971) developed a different path to the theory of knowledge: poetry and
its epistemological value. Xirau (1968, 1975 & 1997) emphasizes the use of poetic images in order to develop epistemological arguments. For instance, for him Jorge Luis Borges’s work *Discusión, Otras inquisiciones, Historia de la eternidad* (1936) can be understood as a philosophical proposal about time. Borges challenged the idea of time as a consecutive set of facts since that idea lead to be near death. —What he wanted to outline was an epistemology of immortality. In one of his main masterpieces, *El aleph* (1949) Borges courageously displays key concepts about immortality in his story, *Los inmortales*. According to this tale, human beings are not capable of achieving wisdom due to time is never sufficient for an average woman or man to delicately understand what exactly life is about. In this manner, for Xirau, poetic images can be used to build arguments in an epistemological discussion. Images help language to transcend its limitations.

I analyze what the poems produced by the students revealed and not just what was said. Those students are not official poets. This idea leads one to think that there is a non-official poetry. Since literature itself was one, among many others, of the importations from Europe to America, then, the common idea of what can be understood as poetry follows Western and European standards. Coon (2014a & 2014b) has proved how the indigenous literature has been silenced by the colonized understanding of literature. The Zapatista narrative epistemology is also one of the main examples of how there are still today other forms of literature that the Western canon does not validate. Even more significant, the indigenous, Zapatista narrative epistemology and many others are epistemologies that the “serious” epistemology does not take into account due to an epistemological racism. Non-official poetry and literature from colonized peoples are greedily obscured by the official one, therefore it is an epistemological battle.

Regarding non-official poetry, ethnopoetics is a critical perspective. Dell Hymes’ *In vain I tried to tell you* (Hymes, 1982) or Dennis Tedlock’s *The spoken word* are some of the main initial works about ethnopoetics where “what there is to be told emerges out of how it is being told” (Blommaert, 2006, p. 182), therefore the metric to be used is indexical, cultural, and semantic. The narratives are organized in lines

| Libertad-nada, el otro / freedom nothing, the other | Diagram 1 | fundamento, identidad / substance, identity |
| Impel hacia adelante / impel forward | Hablar, calcular, pensar, expresar / speak, calculate, thinking, to express) | Colectar, ordenar / gather, order |
| Racionalidad, teoria / rationality, theory | Crear, accion, cosa / create, action, thing | La palabra / word |
| Revelar, mandar / reveal, imperative | | |

Source: Adapted from Boman (1959), my translation from Dussel (1991, p. 201).
or groups of words, which are named “stanzas”. Those stanzas emerge as implicit patterning that make visible some meanings within narratives that people share without being “official” poets, that is, the main idea is that ethnopoetics illuminates the poetry that is not allowed to exist since it is created by non-official poets. The stanzas should reveal a narrative structuring pattern that enables critical amounts of structure, and therefore that structure of stanzas should display an affective stance, rhythm, and relevance; hence, signs of a cultural logic from common places, peoples, and moments. Ethnopoetics reinstates forgotten narratives and their functions, and recaptures the dynamics that guide the original production of poetry (Blommaert, 2006).

The students’ poems are examples of how ethnopoetics enables peripheral poets’ existence. Those students are not important for “serious” scholars nor for policy makers in education. This is because they live in isolated poor and violent neighborhoods. During the fourteen years that I worked with them, there was no anthropologist, sociologist, philosopher, or even a high-ranking administrator listening to them or trying to reach out to them. Ethnopoetics enables looking into their perceptions, meanings, and images through those “simplistic” poems written by the students. Quick (1999) offers an interesting explanation about the connection between “simplistic” poems and ethnopoetics in the next example:

Ho-0-0-o! H’Mother she has moved now
H’Mother she has moved now
Dawn Birth Now
H’Mother she has moved now
Ho-0-0-o! H’Eagle you move now
H’Eagle you move now
Dawn Birth Now
H’Eagle you move now
(Mendoza’s as cited in Quick, 1999, p. 95).

The above poem divided in two stanzas is from Mendoza’s translations of a Pawnee Hako ceremony (1993) and is used by Quick (1999) as an example to explain the epistemological challenge that ethnopoetics represents:

If the average Western literary scholar were to critique the above poem, he or she might note the repetitiveness, simplistic (perhaps even trite) images, lack of poetic device, and meaningless words. This would represent a fair critique of the poem, if it were written with typical Western assumptions about what constitutes good poetry. But what if the poet’s assumptions were different? What if the very context in which this poem was produced dictated entirely different standards than what the above critique assumes? These ‘what ifs’ form the basis of ethnopoetics [Quick, 1999, p. 95].

The student’s poems are also “simplistic” and emerged from a colonized, abandoned, and peripheral epistemological locus of enunciation, but “what if” those poems are seen from different standards?
Latinx-American students share poems with the Academia Cuauhtli

The female Mexican-American and Mexican students produced 27 poems that were grouped in the following categories: “It is worth being a Mexican” (7 poems), “One single country” (4 poems), “Latin American unification” (9 poems), and “Recovering territories and poverty” (8 poems). I will quote and describe one poem from the “Latin American unification” and another one from the section “Recovering territories and poverty” since the majority of the poems were grouped in those subjects. The students wrote the poems in Spanish, and I translated them into English. The following is an example of the poems grouped in the theme: “Latin American unification”:

Niña que asistes a la Academia Cuauhtli, tú también eres parte de nosotros, la patria latinoamericana, del país de Bolívar.  
A veces te sientes triste por no pertenecer exactamente a un lugar, pero tú eres parte de Latinoamérica, de los latinos.  
Algún día volveremos a ser parte de un gran país, tal vez el más grande.

Girl who attends the Academia Cuauhtli, you are part of us, the Latin American homeland, from Bolivar’s country.  
Sometimes you feel sad because you might think you do not belong to any place, but you are part of Latin America, of the Latinos.  
One day we all together will be part of a great country, perhaps the greatest one.

According to the ethnopoetics perspective, “other knowledge, other perspectives, may provide other readings. If these texts are literature, as I believe, that is to be expected, and, indeed, to be hoped. The life of a literary text begets imaginative life” (Hymes, 1982, p. 383). It is possible to see five stanzas of meanings: 1) you; 2) we; 3) Latin America; 4) not belonging to any place; and, 5) Latin America as a great country, perhaps the greatest one. The first two stanzas are explicit; the poem states a distinction between “you” (the students from Texas, United States) and “we” (the students from Guadalajara, Mexico). In the third stanza, Latin America might be the main location from which the student writes, the locus of enunciation from the poet. The stanza number four is more complicated; it is the sense of not belonging to any place. That epistemological place does not have a specific location neither in the United States nor in Mexico. Actually, it seems to be something that is not connected with any particular concrete territory, it might be something that people carry with themselves; then, it is a particular paradox: although that sensation of not belonging to any place comes from the fact of living in a concrete location (the occupied territory of Texas stolen in the war US-Mexico war in the nineteen century), that feeling does not disappear because of just living either in Texas, United States or Guadalajara, Mexico. The fifth stanza representationally “relocates” another territory: Latin America toward a future location, that one where Latin American will be “the greatest” nation. The student figuratively moves Latin American to a different condition in which it will be the greatest nation of the world. Just like the Zapatista
metaphor of “Habrá una vez” (there will one time be) instead of “Había una vez” (once upon a time/there was once a time when) for the girl La defensa zapatista. The insurgent subcomandante Galeano clearly states how there will come a time when girls will be able to grow up without fear. He intentionally uses the commonly used phrase at the beginning of a story in future tense; he urges to move the sense of stories toward the desired future instead of keeping them in the past, where there is nothing to be done. Zapatista thought uses metaphors to outline future practices, future desired, and possible changes. In the same way, the student figuratively moves the current condition of Latin American from being just a location to be perhaps the greatest nation of the world; the student uses his poetic stanza to outline the future of Latin America.

It is interesting how the student from Guadalajara, Mexico, thought that those Latina students who live in Austin, Texas, United States, are also part of that big and single homeland in line of the Bolivarian thought of Latin American unity, especially in the current geopolitical scenario in Latin America (Preciado, 2016). According to the Philosophy of Liberation (Dussel, 1977), the student in Guadalajara might understand that Latinas either from North or South do not need development, but rather, liberation from those patterns of development that oppressed the Latino community throughout the continent. The idea around the line “Algún día volveremos a…” (someday we will return to) might be analyzed in light of the Zapatista’s narrative epistemology and epistemological insight on how, although the colonized peoples suffer difficult times today, there will one day be a bright future for those who survive in the colonies: “Nosotros nacimos de la noche. En ella vivimos. Moriremos en ella. Pero la luz será mañana para los más, para todos aquellos que hoy lloran la noche, para quienes se niega el día…” (EZLN, 4th Declaration, Fourth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle, January 1, 1996). “We were born of the night. We live in the night. We will die in her. But the light will be tomorrow for others, for all those who today weep at the night, for those who have been denied the day” (translation by schools for Chiapas.org). In this perspective education can be nurtured by new critical insights (De Lissovoy 2015; Lara, 2017), especially if the Zapatistas metaphors, such as Algún día volveremos a…”, “Nosotros nacimos de la noche…”, “Pero la luz...”. Those Zapatistas metaphors, as well as those other ones from the students’ poems are epistemological vehicles of knowledge and not just literary figures. The Bolivarian metaphor of “The Latin American homeland” is an intellectual instrument to address how problematic it is that Latin American nations are divided but paradoxically share the experience of colonialism.

Another example of the poems that the students from Guadalajara shared with students at the Academia Cuauhtli comes from the section “Recovering territories and poverty”:

Niñas de la Academia Cuauhtli,
no está mal hablar español,
ustedes también son mexicanos,
y algún día volveremos a obtener el territorio que nos quitaron.
Ustedes tienen sangre latinoamericana.
Girls from the Academia Cuauhtli,
It is not bad to speak Spanish,
you all are also Mexicans,
and one day will recover the territory they took from us.
You all have Latin American blood.

In ethnopoetics it is important to identify stanzas; in this case there are three stanzas of meanings: 1) there-Spanish is not speaking-seized territory; 2) here-Spanish is spoken-Latin America as the original place; and, 3) “the ongoing message-invitation”. The first two stanzas constitute the basis for the third one, “the ongoing message-invitation” which represents an analogic sentence (Dussel, 1991) since it seems to be an invitation to remind the students in Texas that they can flow from one language-territory to the other, and most importantly: that is fine, it is allowed and they are welcome every time the seized territory and peoples can return to the “Latin American blood”. Blood flows and the students from Texas are invited to also flow among those languages and both colonized territories: Texas and Guadalajara.

According to the Zapatista narrative epistemology, this poem denounces a philosophical condition where Mexicans and Mexican-American have no place. This student then, speaks from a periphery where speaking Spanish and coming from a territory that was previously taken in a process of colonialism is invisible for that totality. The entire poem seems to evoke the Zapatista’s epistemological insight of building a homeland, a world where many worlds fit, “where all communities and languages fit, where all steps may walk”: “El mundo que queremos es uno donde quepan muchos mundos. La patria que construimos es una donde quepan todos los pueblos y sus lenguas, que todos los pasos la caminen, que todos la rían, que la aman el pazcan todos” (EZLN, 4th Declaration, Fourth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle, January 1, 1996). “In the world we want many worlds to fit. The Nation which we construct is one where all communities and languages fit, where all steps may walk, where all may have laughter, where all may live the dawn” (translation by Struggle. ws). In the indigenous literature, this might be an example of an intellectual migration (Coon, 2014a, 2014b).

**Discussion. Zapatista narrative epistemology and the Latinx-American students as active agents in the construction of knowledge**

The female students wrote poems to be shared with those students in Austin, Texas. According to the Zapatista narrative epistemology, those poems are distinctive epistemological devices that enable the students to be active agents in the construction of knowledge from Latinx-America. The poems also seem to evoke the historical claim made by Miranda, Bolívar, and San Martín toward the unity of colonized peoples throughout the continent. In light of that common destiny of liberation, the female poets want to touch the students’ hands of the Academia Cuauhtli to tell them that, whether from Guadalajara or Texas, they share the fact of living in a colonial condition.
It is possible to understand how students are epistemologically active agents just when Zapatista narrative epistemology is used to analyze and understand the student’s poems. Otherwise, the students’ poems would be only considered as an anecdotal appendix in the construction of knowledge. According to Dussel, Xirau and ethnopoetics, just when narratives are thought as epistemological vehicles of knowledge, silenced knowledge emerges. As Kramp explains: “Narrative functions as a connective medium for knowing, whereas narratives become the embodiment of an intimate relation between knower and the known […]” (p. 111), then, the epistemological basis from which knowledge will change, and as result, a new kind of epistemology appears. That meta-epistemological process creates a new epistemology since “it [narratives] alters the way we think about what we know and how we know it” (p. 14).

For the most part, narratives are vehicles of new epistemology itself. Since “the study of narratives is the study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), narratives are alternative bridges between reality and the researcher. For instance, the conversational methods (Fontana & Frey, 2000) that break the unidimensionality of doing research create distinct ways to make sense of what methodology means. Likewise, a metaphorical methodology leads to a new epistemology. As Lakoff & Johnsen (2003, p. 8) explain: “Since metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way, we can use metaphorical linguistic expressions to study the nature of metaphorical concepts and to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our activities”. There is too much poetic knowledge to be shared when we look into the non-official poets, as ethnopoetics state. There are stanzas that can illuminate “simplistic” poetic narratives. This leads to the idea that if metaphoric inquiry is incorporated into the discussion regarding what can be considered knowledge or not, the Zapatista narrative epistemology and especially the students’ poems will be revealed as decolonial epistemological vehicles of knowledge. They all are part of an epistemology of the circle (Valenzuela, Zamora, and Rubio, 2015) that seeks to build a social justice curriculum for educators of Latinx youth (Valenzuela, 2016) where their ways of being are transnationally linked. Nevertheless, the students from Guadalajara or Texas are also part of the historical force to gain the second and definitive independence to create a great single homeland for all colonized Latinxs throughout Latina/o-America. As the Zapatistas and subcomandante Marcos-Galeano has pointed out how, the goal is to create a society where women like the girl in La defensa zapatista can grow up without fear.

REFERENCES


**Websites**

Schools for Chiapas.org
Struggle.ws

**Notas**

1 I am using the term “Latinx-America” to refer to the entire American continent (from Canada to Argentina) in an effort to acknowledge the Latinx diaspora that survives either in the North or in the South. This diaspora forms part of that great Latin American homeland and hopes to change the patriarchal colonial condition of all the Latinxs throughout the continent. The term also includes the United States since it is America, that is, it is a Latina-America that strives to acknowledge its Latinx character (Fregoso, 2017).

2 Cuauhtli Academy / Academia Cuauhtli is a language and culture revitalization project located at the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center in Austin, Texas. In this academy, fourth-grade students from three nearby east Austin elementary schools (Metz, Sanchez, and Zavala) are taught a Mexican American and Tejano history curriculum in Spanish every Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. “Our Saturday classes are entirely free and taught in Spanish. Taught by AISD (Austin Independent School District) master dual language teachers and in the context of a 12-to-1 student-teacher ratio, we envision this curriculum as not only providing the academic support that these children need in preparation for their STAAR exams (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) and academic performance, generally, but also providing enrichment for students that we anticipate will have enduring impacts for them” (https://sites.edb.utexas.edu/tecp/academia-cuauhtli-eagle-academy/%E2%80%A8%E2%80%A8/).