

Constructing non-ethnic community belonging on grounds of spatial affiliation: The local adverb *aquí* in a Guatemalan community

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Abstract

This contribution will explore the use and meaning of the local adverb *aquí* ('here') in the context of a rural Guatemalan community. The participants do not position themselves in or are aware of ethnic categories of belonging as constituted in national Guatemalan discourse but employ a different, spatially grounded system of belonging in relation to their community. On the basis of the analysis of a group interaction dealing specifically with social categorization and a corpus of interviews with community members, I show how *aquí* is not only used as spatial reference but takes on social meaning that is related to the community's locally specific construction of belonging.¹

Keywords: place-belonging, ethnicity, deictics, space and place, Guatemala.

1. Ethnic categories and spatial belonging

In Guatemala today, ethnicity is the main categorical marker employed to determine the social belonging of the country's inhabitants. In the Guatemalan censuses and statistics, the identity category system is twofold offering the choice between non-indigenous or indigenous. The label non-indigenous is mostly associated with the *Ladino* category referring to people with colonial heritage, in this case specifically with ancestral links to Spain (Stavenhagen 1965: 54). The indigenous population of Guatemala on the other hand is divided into twenty-four *Mayan* groups (among them, *K'iche'*, *Kaqchikel* and *Mam* are most numerous) and into the population of *Xinka*, who form an indigenous group of their own. Following the Guatemalan ethnic classification beyond the ethnic dichotomy of "non-indigenous" and "indigenous" there exist certain mixed forms. *Garífuna* is a category for people with Afro-Caribbean indigenous mixed heritage who do not only inhabit the north-eastern coasts of Guatemala but also live in Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua. The *Mestizo* category designates mixed indigenous and *Ladino* heritage.² Belonging to one of these categories available in the Guatemalan context has manifold social and economic consequences. While the *Ladino* category is associated with the representation of colonial-based hegemonic culture (del Valle Escalante 2008: 34), indigenous

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²The *Mestizo* category in some sources is treated as equivalent to the *Ladino* category (Stavenhagen 1965).

people still face political, economic and social marginalization.³ Since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, some progress has been made in terms of local or regional participation of indigenous social and political actors on the grounds of their—primarily—ethnically defined categorization (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 7). However, given the educational and economic disparities between the *Ladino*, *Mestizo* and indigenous populations, there is still a long way to go towards ethnic equality. The Guatemalan state is trying to tackle these issues, for example, by implementing bilingual and intercultural education, fostering community-based development programs and encouraging cultural heritage practices.⁴ Furthermore, vast (financial) engagement of international NGOs and foreign governmental institutions in Guatemalan communities and regions is often granted based on categories of indigenous ethnicity. Thus, following many years of persecution and homicide based on indigenous categorization, self-identification in indigenous categories now has some advantages beyond cultural recognition:

“[...] ethnic (and other) categories may be used to allocate rights, regulate actions, distribute benefits and burdens, construct category-specific institutions, identify particular persons as bearers of categorical attributes, ‘cultivate’ populations or, at the extreme, ‘eradicate’ unwanted ‘elements’” (Brubaker 2002: 184).

The community Nueva Alianza, which is the focus of this paper, is located in the western highlands of Guatemala in the department of Quetzaltenango. The rural communities in this area predominantly both self-identify and are identified in ethnic terms as either indigenous or as being from a mixed (*Mestizo*) origin (Dow 1981; Narciso et al. 2014). Strikingly, the members of Nueva Alianza are a compelling exception to the communities described above in terms of their constructions of *belonging* (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011). As the interactional data indicates, their belonging is encompassed in deictic terms and not in terms of ethnicity.

In this paper, I will first outline the story of the community and the data and method, which form the basis of the subsequent analyses. In the third part of the paper a group interaction is analyzed with conversation analytical means identifying categories of belonging both from inside and outside of the community. Spatial belonging referenced with the local adverb *aquí* ‘here’ is then explored further by adding data from interviews conducted in the community and by comparing the use of *aquí* with its alternative *acá* (‘here’). Finally, the findings of spatial belonging constructions will be discussed in the light of locally grounded *pragmatics of place*.

2. A different community story

Before going into the interactional specifics of the community members' belonging constructions, I will shortly introduce the community's story.⁵ Different to other rural communities in the highlands that are inhabited by farmers subsisting of agriculture, the

³ The *Mestizo* population nowadays and very generally speaking occupies the urban and rural lower middle class of Guatemala.

⁴ The governmental encouragement of ethnically grounded practices can be analyzed as linked to their function as a commodity (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 60ff.), especially in the tourism sector of Guatemala.

⁵ A more thorough and expanded community history can be found in Vallentin 2019.

community members of Nueva Alianza are former *colonos*—wage laborers on a *finca*⁶, which was in possession of and managed by a *Ladino* landowner.⁷ Following the community narratives (Vallentin 2019), the *colono* community worked on the finca dedicated to coffee and safran plantation for four to five generations. The first permanent dwellers and ancestors of the current community population “came down from the Altiplano”, from villages around the finca located further up the mountain plateaus. With falling coffee prices in the 1990s, the finca's owner went bankrupt and could not afford to pay his workers any longer. They were not paid for eighteen months and had to migrate to nearby villages and cities to survive. Even though the community members were scattered, they united as a workers' union in a legal fight for their pending payments. After the occupation of the finca (which at that time was already abandoned by the landowner) and successful court proceedings, in the end, the workers never received the outstanding payments but the opportunity to buy the finca. All of the *colono* families returned and formed a democratically organized community-based business, producing coffee and macadamia nuts, and other projects to generate income. One of these projects is community-based eco-tourism, based in the installation of an eco-hotel in the former owner's house. Visitors can get a tour of the community and the surrounding natural sights and a narration of the community story by those who participated in the location's transformation into a democratically managed cooperation. In these narrations, social belonging in terms of relations to the *community-we* and *spatial belonging* in relation to the land are repeatedly referred to. Interestingly, spatial belonging goes hand in hand with *social belonging* and one cannot be thought without the other.

3. Data and method

During two research periods lasting two months each during the summers 2009 and 2011, I collected a corpus of thirty-two interviews with a heterogeneous sample of community members, in which we discussed the times of transformation as well as current community organization and issues. Furthermore, I recorded around 52 hours of interactions allotted to group meetings, interaction between community members, and performed narrations for community outsiders. For this paper, one of the group interaction transcripts will receive special attention, because belonging in terms of social categorization is negotiated explicitly between a community outsider and several women of the community. In this interaction, hegemonic identification categories based on ethnicity clash with local concepts of belonging grounded in constructions of place. The findings from the interaction, in which *place* is marked as a central category for belonging, will be complemented with findings from narratives from the interview corpus, in which community members tell their own story as profoundly intertwined with the place they live in.

⁶ The term *finca* denotes an estate with a vast plantation area, a manor house and several farm buildings.

⁷ Ethnic belonging of the landowner is emphasized by the participants in many of the narrative interviews.

The interactions were examined following *membership categorization analysis* (MCA) (Sacks 1972, 1995; Schegloff 2007, 1972) and *conversation analysis* (Sacks et al. 1974). Thus, attention is paid to the sequential unfolding of categories in interaction, their co-construction by the interlocutors and their attributions and evaluations: “MCA unpacks peoples’ ‘reality-analysis’ (Hester & Francis 1997); that is, how categories are stipulated, how membership in a category is accountable, and, particularly, how speakers proffer their category work *as* common, cultural knowledge” (Stokoe 2012: 283, emphasis in the original). The conversation analytical approach and MCA that traditionally do not go beyond a “nose to data” perspective and thoroughly focus on transcriptions as representations of real-life conversations, will be complemented by ethnographic knowledge from the field (Deppermann 2000). The local meanings of categories that are used by the interlocutors are substantiated by an ethnographic involvement in the research field and the “social worlds” (Strauss 1978) of the interlocutors. Also, implications and assumed knowledge that are not explicitly uttered can be reconstructed more thoroughly with ethnographical means like participant observation and field notes over a certain period of time.

Furthermore, I have thoroughly analyzed the *narrative practice* (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2008, 2012) in the interview corpus. This approach considers narrative performances in their sequential embedding in other parts of interaction, as recipient designed for certain kinds of interlocutors, co-constructed and as a repeated context-sensitive practice narrators engage in. In the following, I will present the analysis of a group interaction, in which local belonging categories are negotiated explicitly with a community outsider.

4. Diverging frames of reference for belonging in interaction

To be able to understand the following excerpt from a three-hour recording of an empowerment training for local women of the community, some contextual knowledge, retrieved from my field notes, is needed. The women are visited in 2011 by a government official from Quetzaltenango (the “trainer”), a 26-year-old woman, who entered the community for the first time. She offers a workshop on organizational empowerment and networking for the local women. This workshop is part of a three-day program in the interval of several weeks. In this first kick-off meeting the trainer firstly facilitates some team-building exercises in the form of games and then proceeds by gathering statistical information about the women. To this end, she dictates ten questions, amongst them about the women's family status, information about land the families own, the ethnic groups they belong to and the languages they speak.⁸ Later on, the women are left alone to work on the answers. The recorded group consists of six female community members ranging between the ages of 30 and 53. For the specific focus of this paper, I will center the observations on the topic of ethnic belonging.

Already during the dictation phase of the workshop, the task of writing down certain questions proves to be difficult for the women, especially, when it comes to the question of ethnicity. They do not seem to be familiar with the word *étnico* ‘ethnic’ the trainer uses (*grupo étnico al que pertenecen* ‘ethnic group you belong to’). After several attempts to pronounce and spell the word, the women appear rather confused about what they are supposed to do with

⁸ A thorough and detailed conversation analytical account of all excerpts of this training relevant to questions of belonging is to be found in Vallentin (2019: Chapter 6).

that seemingly unfamiliar concept. The trainer offers an explanation of the available categories for ethnicity in the context of the workshop: the women can either allocate themselves to the groups of “Mestizo” or “Maya”. If they choose the latter, they have to specify, to which of the twenty-four indigenous tribes they belong. Interestingly, the options of “Xinka” and “Garífuna” are not offered by the trainer, probably due to the geographical confinements and certain expectancies towards the ethnic groups that are plausible in the context of Guatemala's western highlands.⁹ During the time without the trainer, the women work on the question of ethnicity again and try to figure out possible answers collaboratively. They agree on a collective identification as *indígenas* ‘indigenous people’. However, they express a number of doubts regarding their allocation to that category. The doubts also involve the further qualification of the category *indígena* as expressed by the trainer—what *kind* of indigenous people would the women be (Mam, K’iche’, Poquomchi...)? The women resolve the question by choosing the only qualifier they can think of in terms of indigeneity; a spatial one. Sol¹⁰, one of the women in the interaction, states: *aquí nosotros somos nacidos de aquí quetzaltenango* ‘here we are born from here Quetzaltenango’ which is taken up and further specified by Eva as *palmar quetzaltenango*—a reference to the municipality named Palmar Quetzaltenango the community is located in.

The matter is further complicated when the women negotiate the language question and discuss that the fact that they speak Spanish actually impedes their being *Mayan*. A problem is ascertained with self-identifying as *indígena* and speaking Spanish but this problem is not further addressed. Interestingly, the categories “Mayan” and “indigenous” for the women do not seem to be related as hypernym and hyponym—as explained by the trainer—but categories that exist as alternatives to each other. As a community outsider sitting next to the group of women during the workshop, I’m addressed several times to confirm their categorization as “indigenous” (which I politely deny expertise on). The choice for *indígena* to comply with the trainer's task to express ethnic social belonging, thus, rather appears to be a “makeshift category” (Vallentin 2019) for the community women.

The following excerpt from the workshop interaction takes place after the dictation and the working phase. The women present their results in written form to the trainer. She reads the notes of the women until she interrupts her quiet reading and the women's accompanying chatter after having read the answer to the ethnic question. This is where the transcription begins. The transcription convention can be consulted at the end of the paper. I will first provide the transcript in Spanish and then an English translation.

⁹ *Ladino* is not considered to be an ethnic category at all for the trainer, as visible in excerpt (1). This however does not go along with academic conceptualizations of the term, in which *Ladino* indeed is considered an ethnic category (Matthew 2006; del Valle Escalante 2008).

¹⁰ All names are anonymized.

(1) *Somos de aquí todos* (01:48:02–01:50:06)¹¹

- 1 *Trainer:* <<ff>todas>\ (--) todas son indígenas,
2 *Flor:* sí
3 *Ana:* [sí]
4 *Eva:* [sí]
5 *Sol:* [sí] somos in/ (.) so/ [(inc. 1)]
6 *Trainer:* [pero: de qué pueblo digamos]
7 *Flor:* <<aspirated short laughter>> <<smiling>del palmar quetzal/>
 <<laughter>>
8 *Ana:* sí pu:es
9 *Trainer:* no pero digamos ma:m (-) quichés [(1)]
10 *Eva:* [no:]
11 *Trainer:* poqomchis (--)
12 *Ana:* [espa/ (--) solo por [español]
13 *Eva:* [nosotros somos nacidos de aquí]
14 *Ana:* somos de aquí (--)
15 *Trainer:* sí pero no saben ustedes digamos de qué grupo (--) de qué pueblo'
16 *Flor:* [no]
17 *Eva:* [no]
18 *Sol:* [no]
19 *Trainer:* [no saben]
20 *Flor:* [no sabemos]
21 *Eva:* [no]
22 *Trainer:* y por que se denominan <<laughing>in↑DÍGenas>
23 *Ana:* [(inc. 1,7s)]
24 *Eva:* [porque:]
25 *Sol:* [<<pp>los guatemaltecos/los pueblos que (inc.0,2) hablar su idioma> (-
 -)]
26 *Trainer:* (1,5) porque digamos indígenas están como les digo los ma:m k'ichés
 (-) poqomchis
27 (-) kaqchike:les (-) o sea son los veinticuatro pueblos(--) ahora mestizo (-)
 o=sea un mes[tizos]
28 *Eva:* [mestizos tambien?]
29 *Sol:* [mestizo (inc. 0,5)]
30 *Trainer:* pues yo no sé porque
31 *Flor:* <<quiet laughter>>
32 *Pia:* <<giggles>>
33 *Trainer:* <<smiling>ustedes son los que conocen su historia y su origen> [(--
) no les puedo
34 poner]
35 *Flor:* [°h: por e:so] (--) por eso nosotros por=allí pusimos indígenas (2)
 porque nosotros no
36 sabemos
37 *Trainer:* <<talking to the other workgroup>> (6,5) <<directed to all the
 women>> es que
38 digamos que: en los grupos étnicos el ladino no existe \ (--)
39 *Flor:* entonces

¹¹ The data in examples 1–7 stem from Vallentin (2019).

- 40 Trainer: *solo el mestizo (--) o sea el mestizo es una mezcla digamos (--) entre::*
 (---) *varios*
 41 *grupos (--) étnicos (-) o sea no no se sabe bien su origen (---) aha (--) o=sea es*
una mezcla
 42 *entre: (-) indígen[as y:]*
 43 Eva: *[es como nosotros] no sabemos de nuestros antepasados (--) [de dónde*
eran]
 44 Trainer: *[por eso es lo que es/] [por eso no saben (--) como <<laughing>]*
 45 Ana: *[no pues no sabemos pues]*
 46 Trainer: *denominarse>*
 47 Flor: *que hemos hemos nacido [aquí y no sabemos]*
 48 Ana: *[sí pues (---) que somos] [de aquí TODos]*
 49 Eva: *[no sa]bemos que somos nacidos TODos de: (--) [aquí]*
 50 Trainer: *[entonces] la tarea ahorita es (-) para la próxima*
<<laughing>reunión cuando venga
 51 *ya tienen que saber> (.) algo de su historia por lo menos cuál es su origen (-)*
 52 Flor: *[mh:]*
 53 Trainer: *[aha] porque igual no saben ni dónde ubicarse ustedes*

(1) `All are indigenous' (01:48:02–01:50:06)

- 1 Trainer: *<<ff>all_{FEM}> (--) all_{FEM} are indigenous*
 2 Flor: *yes*
 3 Ana: *[yes]*
 4 Eva: *[yes]*
 5 Sol: *yes] we are (.) we [(inc. 1)]*
 6 Trainer: *[but of which tribe let's say]*
 7 Flor: *<<aspirated short laughter>> <<smiling>of Palmar Quetzal/>*
<<laughter>>
 8 Ana: *yes well*
 9 Trainer: *no but let's say Mam (-) K'iche's [(1)]*
 10 Eva: *[no:]*
 11 Trainer: *Poqomchi (--)*
 12 Ana: *[Span/ (--) only in [Spanish]*
 13 Eva: *[we are born here]*
 14 Ana: *we are from here (--)*
 15 Trainer: *yes but don't you know let's say from which group (--) from which*
tribe
 16 Flor: *[no]*
 17 Eva: *[no]*
 18 Sol: *[no]*
 19 Trainer: *[you don't know]*
 20 Flor: *[we don't know]*
 21 Eva: *[no]*
 22 Trainer: *and why do you call yourself <<laughing>indigenous>*
 23 Ana: *[(inc. 1,7s)]*
 24 Eva: *[because]*
 25 Sol: *[<<pp>the guatemalans/the tribes who (inc.0,2) speak their language> (--)*
)]

- 26 Trainer: (1,5) because let's say indigenous are like I tell you the Mam K'iche's
(-) Poqomchis (--)
- 27 Kaqchikels (-) that means the twenty-four tribes (--) now a mestizo (--) that
means a mes[tizos]
- 28 Eva: [mestizos too?]
- 29 Sol: [mestizo (inc. 0,5)]
- 30 Trainer: well I don't know because
- 31 Flor: <<quiet laughter>>
- 32 Pia: <<giggles>>
- 33 Trainer: <<smiling>> you are the ones who know your history and your origin>
[(-) I cannot put
34 (it) down for you]
- 35 Flor: [°h that's why] (--) that's why we put there indigenous (2) because
we_{MASC} don't
36 know
- 37 Trainer: <<talking to the other workgroup>> (6,5) <<directed to all the
women>> it's that let's say
38 that in the ethnic groups the Ladino does not exist (--)
- 39 Flor: so
- 40 Trainer: only the mestizo (--) that means the mestizo is a mixture let's say (--)
between (---)
- 41 different ethnic (--) groups (-) that means one doesn't know well about its
origin (---) aha (--) that
42 means it is a mixture between (-) indigen[ous and]
- 43 Eva: [it is like we_{MASC}] don't know of our ancestors (--) [where they came
from]
- 44 Trainer: [that's why it's like that] [that's why you don't know (--) <<laughing>]
- 45 Ana: [no well we don't know then]
- 46 Trainer: how to call yourself>
- 47 Flor: we were born [here and we don't know]
- 48 Ana: [well yes (---) we are] [all_{MASC} from here]
- 49 Eva: [we don't] know we are all _{MASC} born (--) [here]
- 50 Trainer: [so] the task is now (-) for the next <<laughing>reunion when I'm
coming you will have
51 to know> (.) something about your history at least what your origin is (-)
- 52 Flor: [mh:]
- 53 Trainer: [yes] because you don't even know where to place yourselves

The excerpt is presented at length because belonging is explicitly negotiated here in two diverging category systems—a national hegemonic one based on ethnicity and a local one figuring place and origin as central and intertwined categories for belonging. The following analysis will focus on those parts of the interaction in which these categories are especially prominent.¹²

¹² An exhaustive analysis of the interactional positions (of power) at play in this interaction and the sequences of “poly-voiced chorus” (Vallentin 2019) (lines 2–5, 16–18 and 47–49 in the excerpt) is presented in Vallentin (2019).

The excerpt starts with the trainer restating the women's answer on the ethnic question. The falling pitch at the end of the clause suggests that her utterance is intended as a statement, however, the women treat it like a question, which is indicated by the answer sequence from four of the six participating women (lines 2–5). The trainer then inquires about the qualification of the term indigenous: *pero: de qué pueblo digamos* ‘but of which tribe let's say’ (line 6) implying that the women's answer is not sufficient regarding her twofold category system (*mestizo* or *indígena*) with the subcategories that specify the indigenous term. The women try to resort to the spatial qualifier they hesitantly agreed on in previous sequences. Notice the quality of Flor's turn, in which she states the municipality the community belongs to (line 7). She takes the turn laughing shortly, speaks with a smiling voice, aborts the utterance with the three last syllables still missing from the word *Quetzaltenango* and ends her turn again with rhythmic laughter. The abortion of the turn and the accompanying laughter index dissociation from her own words and insecurity about the matter, as was explicitly expressed amongst the women when the spatial qualifier was first discussed. The trainer recourses to the category qualifiers in terms of ethnic groups she already explained in the former sequences (lines 9 and 11). Her inquiry is first met by Ana with a reference to Spanish as the community's language (which apparently rules out any affiliations to the named *pueblos* ‘tribes’) followed by two accounts both emphasizing birth and origin linked to *aquí* ‘here’ (lines 13 and 14). The women resort to an argumentation in spatial terms with the local adverb *aquí* as the central concept. A repeated pattern in the orientation to spatiality is noticeable: As we have seen in the above description the chosen qualifier for the category *indígena* is a spatial one referring to (*palmar quetzaltenango*) and not one that specifies an ethnic group.

In lines 15–46 the interaction revolves yet again around the category system of the trainer, who does not acknowledge the explanation in terms of spatial belonging as proposed by Eva and Ana. It becomes evident that the women frame their inability to locate themselves in terms of the trainer's category system as a lack of knowledge (lines 16–18; 20–21; and 35–36). This positioning of the community women as “lacking knowledge” is supported by the trainer, expressing astonishment and amusement. It is marked by her speaking with a smiling voice (line 33) when she allocates the expertise of ethnic classification to the women themselves and when she utters the finding that the women indeed cannot label themselves (in her categories) with accompanying laughter (lines 44 and 46).

The women explain that their lack of knowledge about ethnic categories is due to a lack of knowledge about their ancestors' origins (line 43). Following this, three utterances from three different speakers support this statement: ‘we were born [here and we don't know]’ (line 47); [well yes (---) we are] [all_{MASC} from here] (line 48); and ‘[we don't] know we are all_{MASC} born (--) [here]’ (line 49). Two lines of argumentation unfold in these utterances. As they were ‘born’ or ‘from’ here they would not know about their ancestors. On a second level these statements convey the women's emphasis of their local provenance. As we have already seen with their agreement on a spatial qualifier for the indigenous category (*los indígenas del Palmar* ‘the indigenous of Palmar’), their conceptualization of belonging is expressed as anchored in space, specifically articulated as anchored in the deictic space of the ‘here’ (*aquí*). The universality of this claim can be noticed in the grammatical forms the women use when

they talk about the origins of ‘all’ of them. *Todos* (lines 48 and 49) is used in the male grammatical form that can incorporate both genders. In the previous sequences and the remainder of the interaction, the women frequently use the female form (*todas*) when they refer only to themselves. Hence, the claim of spatial rootedness is made not only for the women who are present in the interaction, but rather for an ‘all’ that through its grammatical marker makes reference to the overall community-we.

The trainer closes the sequence on categories of belonging with a plea to the women to educate themselves on their origin, as they ‘don’t even know where to place’ themselves (*no saben ni dónde ubicarse*, line 53). The women, however, quite clearly know where to place themselves—in the ‘here’ of the community. It becomes evident in this excerpt but also in the ongoing development of the interaction that the women’s perspective on their own social categorization is not acknowledged by the trainer—a visiting outsider. As a delegate from the state, she is a representative of official Guatemalan discourse on *politics of belonging* (Yuval-Davis 2006) that is framed in ethnic terms and based on remnants of colonial classifying practices (Wade 2010). As we can see in her explanation of the categories, it is not only the general category system that is determined but also the availability of certain categories: the community women can only be either *Mestizo* or *Maya*; being *Ladino* (or something else) is out of the question for the trainer from the outset. However, the community members do not position themselves in this matrix and employ different—i.e. spatial—“frame(s) of reference” (Anchimbe & Janney 2011: 1451). Social belonging in the community is thus framed around *place-belongingness* (Antonsich 2010: 645) that goes along with local concepts of belonging which diverge from the national discourse.

Interestingly, for this community, the frame of reference for belonging is a trace (Green 2009) of colonial structures that remained in post-colonial times. The owners of big plantations were descendants from Spanish colonizers, the Guatemalan *Ladino* population. The current population of the community is the fifth generation of workers on the plantation. In the interviews, some recall their ancestors ‘coming down’ from other villages in the surrounding mountains. The rural, mountainous areas around the finca are generally populated by self-identifying *Mayans* of different indigenous tribes or *Mestizos*. By changing their status from self-sustainable farmers to *colonos*—permanent “proletarianized” (Smith 1984: 213) workforce on the plantation—the frames for constructing collectivity change. On the plantations, the *Ladino* culture was hegemonic, the language spoken around the premises was Spanish. One can only assume that the workers and their families assimilated to this culture—especially regarding the use of the Spanish language—and found a common reference to their social belonging not in ethnic but in spatial terms (Vallentin 2019) through the shared “feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place” (Antonsich 2010: 645).¹³ The emphasis on spatial belonging can also be discussed along the lines of shared suffering and experiences (being exploited workers) and the close relationship of the farmers to their *tierra* (‘land’). Both are related to the category of space that interlinks with experience and practice.

¹³ Only one of the community members was reported to have some competence in an indigenous language. After my inquiry with her what this language might be and where and how she would use it, the participant denied any competence. She also said she would not remember what the language was called.

It is striking that the women use the local deictic *aquí* ‘here’ in relation to the trainer’s question about groups of belonging. As a deictic form ‘here’ needs contextual knowledge to be disambiguated in interaction. However, the women do not use a local qualifier for ‘here’ in the parts in which they argue their own frames of belonging. In relation to the collective ‘we’, the utterances of *aquí* in their ambiguity are not to be considered “mistakes, inaccuracies or inadequacies, but rather as essential, i.e. meaningful, parts of spatial sense-making” (Gerst, Höfler, & Vallentin forthcoming). To draw a more complex picture of the use of this specific local adverb, I will now explore other interactional and social contexts, in which community members talk to outsiders about their belonging and in which place-belonging is the main qualifier for social belonging.¹⁴

5. The use of *aquí* in interactions with outsiders

For the following examination of the local adverb *aquí*, I look at other interactions that were recorded during my field research in the Guatemalan community. This corpus consists of the thirty-two interviews with community members, in which the story of community history and transformation is told to me as an interviewer and community outsider. The majority of these stories—with narrations of crisis in, displacement from and return to the community—turn into stories of belonging. In the following examples, the local adverb is used in repeated form for condensed sequences that topicalize origin and belonging.

(2) *Aquí soy nacida aquí* (00:14:40–00:14:55)

- 1 Bea: e::h es que <<all>yo aquí yo aquí soy nacida> (--)
- 2 I: sí
- 3 Bea: aha yo aquí soy nacida aquí en esta comunidad es por eso que
- 4 yo aquí me siento:: (---) no sé (-) me siento mu::y (--) muy
- 5 conTENta y:: (--) porque aquí he nacido pues

(2) ‘Here I’m born here’ (00:14:40–00:14:55)

- 1 Bea: e::h it is that <<all>I here I am born here> (--)
- 2 I: yes
- 3 Bea: yes I here I am born here in this community that is why
- 4 here I feel (---) I don’t know (-) I feel very (--) very
- 5 satisfied and (--) because well I was born here

In this short extract from an interview with Bea, the local adverb appears repeatedly (three times) in combination with the verb *nacer* ‘to be born’ and once with *sentir* ‘to feel’. The interviewer’s question eliciting this sequence was directed at her feeling as a part of the community: *se siente parte integral de la comunidad?* (‘do you feel like an integral part of the community?’). *Aquí* is specified by the speaker with *en esta comunidad* ‘in this community’ (line 3) after three unspecified usages, even though disambiguation is not required in the interactional circumstances of the interview, which at that point topically encompasses a

¹⁴ In Vallentin (2019: Chapter 8.2) there is empirical data provided for talking about belonging between community members and without the interactional participation of community outsiders, expanding the findings to diverse social contexts in the community.

question on being part of the community. The local adverb *aquí* is not only multiply updated, foregrounded and emphasized by its repeated use in this sequence, but also by its use both in preverbal and postverbal position *aquí soy nacida aquí* (line 3). The preverbal position of the local adverb is a marked form (Battistella 1990) and thus especially salient as local adverbs generally appear postverbally in Spanish. It is also notable that the local adverb is preceded by a personal pronoun—*yo* ‘I’—that does not necessarily need to be uttered, since the person is referenced in the 1st person singular verbal forms as well (*soy, me siento*). The speaker, therefore, expends a lot of linguistic effort to speak about her (emotional) attachments to the ‘here’ in an interaction with me as a community outsider.

In the following example Alejandro responds to the interviewer's question ‘since when do you live here’ and tells his story of the involuntary migration due to the financial crisis at the finca.

(3) *Yo de aquí era* (00:01:34–00:01:54)

- 1 *Alejandro: entonces: (--) me vine otra vez para=acá (---) y como:: yo de*
- 2 *aquí era=pues aquí nací (1,1) o sea que aquí le sentía este: (---) cariño aquí a*
- 3 *esta tierra pues*
- 4 *I: mh*
- 5 *Alejandro: como:: nosotros aquí crecimos (---) entonces: (-) yo me siento*
- 6 *contento que estoy [aquí]*
- 7 *I: [mhm]*
- 8 *Alejandro: trabaja:ndo*

(3) ‘I was from here’ (00:01:34–00:01:54)

- 1 *Alejandro: so (--) I came back here again (---) and as I was from*
- 2 *here well I was born here (1,1) that means that here I felt this (---) affection*
- 3 *here*
- 4 *I: mh*
- 5 *Alejandro: as we grew up here (---) so (-) I feel*
- 6 *satisfied that I’m [here]*
- 7 *I: [mhm]*
- 8 *Alejandro: working*

Again, *aquí* is uttered several times in this short interview sequence and is related to origin (*ser de* ‘being from’, *nacer* ‘to be born’, *crecer* ‘to grow up’) and emotional attachment (*sentir cariño* ‘feel affection’, *sentirse contento* ‘to feel satisfied’) similar to example 2. He also positions the local adverb in both positions—preverbally (in lines 2 and 5) and postverbally (line 6). However, the marked preverbal form predominates here, as in Bea's interview sequence. Another pattern noticeable in this extract is that Alejandro explicitly utters *nosotros* ‘we_{MASC}’ in the phrasal relation with *aquí crecimos* ‘we grew up here’ even though the verbal person is already entailed in the verb conjugation. Again, the supplemental use of the pronoun is the marked form which in a pro-drop language like Spanish does not have to be uttered. A final example is a sequence from the interview with Juan. It is part of a constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989) in his narrative of community transformation in which he voices the community-we in interaction with its antagonists—the henchmen of the former plantation owner.

(4) *Nosotros somos de aquí* (00:18:19–00:19:01)

- 1 Juan: *nosotros somos de aquí de la Alianza* (---) *vivimos aquí y*
- 2 *aquí no nos pueden sacar*

(4) 'We are from here' (00:18:19–00:19:01)

- 1 Juan: we are from here of the Alianza (---) we live here and here
- 2 you_{PL} cannot remove us

Juan argues the impossibility of the community's displacement by referring to its rootedness in the space of *aquí* which is disambiguated with the name of the community (line 1). The speaker creates a three-item list (Roth 2005: 193), with *aquí* referencing the space where the actions take place. *Aquí* is uttered again in the context of verbs that place attachment (*ser de* 'being from', *vivir* 'live') and a negative assessment of displacement of the 'we'. In all three examples, the verbs modified by *aquí*, the relation to the specific space that is referenced with *aquí* is conceptualized as encompassing a certain temporal frame—especially concerning the verbs of origin (being born and being from 'here'). The speakers claim of belonging within the 'here' since their very existence, since birth—individually ('I was born here') as well as collectively ('we were born here', 'we are from here'). The local adverb *aquí* is repeated, often grammatically marked in preverbal position and thus foregrounded in these specific interactions with the researcher, who is not a part of the community. Given the community story of forced migration, unlawful appropriation and finally, legal property rights, the participants use *aquí* when it comes to the legitimization and authentication of the speaker's claims regarding their spatial and social belonging (Vallentin 2019). The abundant use of *aquí* is a pattern present in the whole interview corpus and that can also be substantiated by other interactions the community members engage in with community outsiders.

6. *Aquí* and *acá*—local pragmatics of place

In the Spanish language, especially for Latin American varieties, there is another possibility to express reference to a nearby locality: with the local adverb *acá* 'here'. The semantic nuances of both terms are highly speech community-specific; in some cases, they refer to similarly conceptualized space around the speaker, in others *aquí* references a specific location of the speaker and *acá* rather an area around them (Jungbluth 2005: 171). Other research has shown that it can be the other way around as well (Maldonado 2013: 291). Another possible differentiation of the two terms is observed by Sacks (1954) who found that *acá* is much more prone to be used with verbs of movement whereas *aquí* is not. In the interview corpus *aquí* appears with 433 tokens, *acá* with 122 (Vallentin 2019).¹⁵ Both have a high number of occurrences with unexplicit references, both adverbs appear with verbs of movement and in relations to positions of the speaker. The difference between the two forms is of another quality. In the community's communicative practice (Hanks 1996), *aquí* not only references a specific space but has inherent social and temporal meanings and relates to social and spatial belonging, whereas *acá* does not. The following examples will illustrate this argument more clearly.

In example 3, repeated here in part as 5, Alejandro uses both *aquí* and *acá* in his utterance:

¹⁵ 16 occurrences of *aquí* in the interview corpus have a temporal function.

(5) Interview with Alejandro (00:01:34–00:01:45)

- 1 Alejandro: *entonces (--) me vine otra vez para=acá (---) y como:: yo de*
- 2 *aquí era=pues aquí nací (1,1) o sea que aquí le sentía este: (---) cariño aquí a*
- 3 *esta tierra pues*

(5) Interview with Alejandro (00:01:34–00:01:45)

- 1 Alejandro: so (--) I came back here again (---) and as I was from
- 2 here well I was born here (1,1) that means that here I felt this (---) affection
- 3 here
- 3 to this land well

Acá references the space of the community and is accompanied by a verb of movement. *Aquí* is accompanied with verbs of spatial and social belonging and specific feelings of attachments towards this space. Thus, *aquí* in this sequence does more than merely referencing space; it conveys certain stances and evaluations of the speakers towards that space (Hanks 2005: 211). The same can be observed in the following utterance from Luis.

(6) Interview with Luis (02:52:98–03:00:37)

- me volvía venir de nuevo por acá (.) porque aquí nací y aquí (--) moriré*
 `I returned to come back again here (.) because I was born here and here (--) I will die´

Similar to Alejandro's utterance, Luis uses *acá* to reference space with a verb of movement. *Aquí* is used for spatial reference but also qualifies the verbs *nacer* `to be born´ and *morir* `to die´. *Aquí* is related to the participant's lifecycle and his attachments to a specific space. Finally, Bianca, a 25-year-old woman from the community answers the following to my question whether she would ever leave the community when she would get married.

(7) Interview with Bianca (25:27:20–25:28:93)

- si es alguien de aquí [-] me quedo acá*
 `if it is someone from here [-] I stay here´

Once more *acá* is used for spatial reference; *aquí* is used with the verb *ser de* `being from´ and points to spatial origin of the possible groom. After a thorough inquiry of the whole interview corpus, *aquí* is the only form used to qualify verbs lexically pointing to origin, attachment or *aquí* as a space of social relations. *Acá* is used in the corpus to do referential work but never in connection with expressions of spatial and social belonging.¹⁶

The marked forms of *aquí* in terms of syntactic positioning and repetition in a rather condensed interactional space (as in examples 2–4) foreground the relevance the speakers attribute to the adverb in the interactions with a community outsider. This function of being a central reference of belonging is especially salient when belonging needs to be articulated, legitimized and “naturalized” in front of an “other” from outside.

¹⁶ There are tokens in the corpus where *aquí* is also used for spatial reference without social meaning.

7. Conclusion—Constructing place with *aquí*

In this Guatemalan community, *aquí* is used as an adverb that not only functions as a spatial reference but is charged with social meaning (Hanks 2005). This is observed for interactions with outsiders, in which belonging is made relevant. In the social field of the community, with its specific history as a *Ladino*-owned finca and its story of displacement, struggle and comeback, deictic expressions “are actually reshaped by the field to which they articulate” (Hanks 2005: 194), and the place itself becomes the main referent enabling feelings of belonging *to* and *with* the community (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011). A relationship between space and speakers is constructed, “the kinds of ‘space’ articulated in deixis are socially constituted, not sheer physical relations” (Hanks 2005: 210). The constitution of a specific space—here with *aquí* referencing a social space of belonging—thus depends on its recurrent use in linguistic practice by speakers with shared knowledge and experiences that semantically expand the “original” function of *aquí* (Hanks 2005: 211). By adding an evaluative and social dimension to the semantics of *aquí*, speakers construe the referenced space as *place*: “place-making encompasses boundary-drawing, naming, attributions and evaluations and other social and communicative practices relating to space” (Gerst, Höfler, & Vallentin forthcoming). Place is conceived as something that requires specific spatial human experiences (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977) that are integrated in the locally contextualized use of *aquí*. In their “formidable generality” (Hanks 2005: 195), deictics are especially suitable to take on meanings that are highly specific to communities of communicative practice (Eckert 2000). Thus, the findings contribute to a view on belonging constructions as a practice of locally specific “linguistic place-making” (Cornips & de Rooij 2018: 7f.).

Along these lines, a post-colonial view on language use in general, and pragmatics specifically, calls for a speaker-centered view that is necessarily grounded in communities' communicative practices and the local contexts in which words are uttered: “With the establishment of new discursive conventions, linguistic items such as conversational routines may be refunctionalized by adopting a different contextual meaning” (Schubert & Volkmann 2016: xii). In post-colonial Guatemala, this does not only apply to self-identifying indigenous communities and their languages but also to communities that form part of the Guatemalan Spanish speech community whose social specifics can be traced back to colonial structures. It is in the encounters with hegemonic systems of meaning, as has been shown, for example, very vividly in excerpt 1, that locally specific meanings—as belonging in spatial and not in ethnic terms—come to the fore. These need careful ethnographically grounded reconstructions of communicative practice(s) that challenge established systems not only in terms of social categorization but also in terms of normative semantics.

Transcription convention (partly following GAT II, Selting et al. 2009)

[]	two (or more) participants speak at the same time
°h	drawing of breath
(-)	pause (ca. 0,25s)
(--)	pause (ca. 0,5s)
(---)	pause (ca. 0,75s)
(1.3)	pause as in brackets
.	pitch bend after an audible end of sentence
,	pitch bend after an emphasized unit which marks no end of sentence
;	pitch bend after a slightly interrogative unit
?	pitch bend after a clear question
:	prolongation of vowel
=	ligature
/	stop/self-correction
<<...>>	para-verbal phenomena
<<acc>>	accelerando
FEM/MASC	feminine form/masculine form

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