Typological and social constraints on language contact: Amerindian languages in contact with Spanish

Gómez Rendón, J.A.

Citation for published version (APA):
Otomí or hñäñho\(^1\) is spoken in the Mexican states of Hidalgo, México and Querétaro, with some speakers also in Puebla and Veracruz. It belongs to the Otopamean branch of the Otomanguean language family, along with Pame, Chichimeca, Mazahua, Matlatzinca and Ocuilteco. The Otomanguean family ranks second in geographical distribution after the Uto-Aztecan (Ortiz Alvarez 2005: 37). The Otomí varieties studied here are spoken in the state of Querétaro. In addition to traditional Otomí areas in central Mexico, speakers of hñäñho are present in a few towns in Guanajuato and Michoacán as well as in the town of Ixtenco in the Nahuatl-dominant state of Tlaxcala. Otomí is spoken in these enclaves only by a handful of speakers, even if people still consider themselves ethnically as Otomí. At the same time, an ever-increasing number of Otomí speakers have migrated to Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara and Mazatlán.

A marked process of dialectalization is observed in present-day Otomí as a result of a pattern of scattered settlement across states and the lack of contact among Otomí areas. Tlaxcala Otomí is the most deviant variety in comparison to Querétaro Otomí, with no contact among speakers of these varieties and a lower degree of mutual intelligibility. Dialectal variation in Otomí and other issues of genetic classification are discussed in section 8.3. In addition to dialectalization, many Otomí communities are experiencing a rapid shift to Spanish, particularly in the state of Mexico,\(^2\) where the highest levels of migration are attested (Barrientos López 2004: 6).

The 1970 census gave a total number of 221,080 speakers of hñäñho, unevenly distributed over eight states. The 2000 census show rather similar numbers. In that year the states with the largest number of Otomí speakers (Hidalgo, Mexico and Querétaro) counted a total of 241,496 speakers. The Otomí population

\(^1\) The word ‘Otomí’ is an ethnic denomination considered negative by speakers of this language, who prefer to call themselves ñañho and their language hñäñho. Following Hekking (1998: 8) the etymology of the word hñäñho means ‘well-spoken language’, and ñañho, ‘those who speak well’. Another hypothesis has it that the root –ñho is a derivation of the word xīnu ‘nose’ in reference to the nasal character of Otomí. Hekking (1995: 8) grants no credibility to this hypothesis because it is unlikely that such a term is used for self-identification.

\(^2\) This process becomes evident if we consider the total population of Otomi households in the state of Mexico for 2000. Of 279,036 individuals living in Otomi households, only 104,579 (37.5%) reported to be speakers of Otomí. This noticeable gap shows not only that a rapid process of language shift is taking place in most Otomí communities as indicated above, but also that a large number of these communities remain ethnically loyal after losing their language.
of Veracruz, Puebla, Guanajuato and Tlaxcala is minimal. However, these numbers do not coincide with those given by Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, a state agency in charge of promoting the development of indigenous peoples in Mexico, according to which the number of Otomí speakers was 327,318 for the same year. Censal data should be read with caution because all censuses so far have failed to account for two relevant facts. One is the migration of indigenous people to the cities, where they usually report as non-speakers of indigenous languages even if they actually are, for reasons of low linguistic and ethnic self-esteem (Hekking 1998: 21). The other is ethnic identification, according to which non-speakers of Otomí report themselves as speakers on the basis of their identification with the Otomí culture, especially in communities where the language is widely spoken. In view of these factors, it is more likely that the total number of Otomí speakers should rise above 300,000, and this is in fact the figure used by most linguistic and anthropological studies.

Otomí is the strongest indigenous language in the state of Querétaro. There are very small numbers of speakers of Mazahua and Pame on the state border with the states of Mexico and San Luis Potosí. Otomí is spoken along with Nahuatl (Uto-Aztec) and Tepehua (Totonaco-Tepehua) in the state of Hidalgo, and along with Nahuatl and other Otomanguean languages including Mazahua, Matlatzinca and Ocuilteco in the state of Mexico. In all the states, however, Otomí is in permanent contact with Spanish. Mexico shows an ongoing process of Hispanicization of its indigenous peoples. This process is especially visible among Otomí speakers, as it becomes clear from a comparison of the percentages of indigenous people who speak native languages in Mexico (Table 8.1 below). Unlike other indigenous peoples with high percentages of language maintenance – Tzeltal and Tzotzil are the most remarkable – speakers of hñäñho represent only half of the Otomí ethnic population. A similar degree of language loss is shown by Mazahua, another language of the Otopamean branch.

---

3 Other newcomers are speakers of Mixe (Mixe-Zoque) and Nahuatl (Uto-Aztecan), though in small numbers.
Table 8.1 Total population and number of speakers per indigenous language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Native Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tzeltal</td>
<td>384,074</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzotzil</td>
<td>406,962</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazateco</td>
<td>305,836</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huasteco</td>
<td>226,447</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixteco</td>
<td>726,601</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Náhuatl</td>
<td>2,445,969</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totonaca</td>
<td>411,266</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapoteco</td>
<td>777,253</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>1,475,575</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otomí</td>
<td>646,875</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazahua</td>
<td>326,660</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas

Table 8.2 shows the percentage of speakers of the languages of the Otopamean branch from the total ethnic population. The Otopamean language with the highest degree of language loss is Ocuilteco, spoken in Mexico State, where there are speakers of Mazahua and Otomí as well.

Table 8.2 Total population and number of speakers in the Otopamean branch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Native speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pame</td>
<td>12,572</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chichimeca Jonaz</td>
<td>3,169</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otomí</td>
<td>646,875</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matlatzinca</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazahua</td>
<td>326,660</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocuilteco</td>
<td>1,759</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data suggest that the linguistic vitality of Otopamean languages is severely endangered, especially if compared to languages from other families such as Uto-Aztecan (Nahuatl) or Mayan (Tzeltal, Tzotzil), but also to Otomanguean languages such as Zapotec or Mixtec.
Relevant factors influencing language shift among Otomí speakers in Querétaro include the following, according to Hekking (1998: 19-21): the lower socioeconomic status of Otomí speakers; a traditional association of Otomí language and culture with negative features; the comparatively small number of Otomí speakers in relation to other ethnic groups; and the lack of contact among speakers of different Otomí varieties. While each of these factors contributes differently to the process of language shift and loss, the first of them is the most influencing one in my opinion. The small size of the Otomí population with respect to other ethnolinguistic groups is only a secondary factor, because the number of Otomí speakers is larger than the number of speakers of other indigenous languages in Mexico. From a dynamic demographical perspective, the non-contact among Otomí speakers is also decisive. At a community scale perspective isolation gives the impression that Otomí speakers are few, thereby reinforcing a linguistic ideology of ‘minority group’.\footnote{Isolation is being reduced nowadays, because Otomí groups of different states are supporting organizational and political initiatives for integration. Hekking (1998: 21) noticed an ethnic mobilization in the mid nineties.}

From an examination of different sources I conclude that no agreement exists about the number of speakers of Querétaro Otomí. Ortiz Álvarez (2005: 55) gives 22,077 speakers in 2000. However, the sum of Otomí speakers from the highlands and the semi-desert given by Mendoza \textit{et al} (2006: 10) amounts to 19,321 speakers in the same year. Still, both figures are lower than those for the states of Hidalgo and Mexico, with 110,043 and 104,357 speakers, respectively. According to Mendoza \textit{et al} (2006) speakers of Querétaro Otomí were concentrated in the municipality of Amealco (13,007), while their number in the municipalities of Colón, Cadereyta, Peñamiller, Tolimán, Pedro Escobedo, Enrique Montes and Tequisquiapan was only 6,314. A demographic report prepared by SEDESU (2006) on the basis of \textit{II Conteo de Población y Vivienda 2005} show that these numbers do not account for all the Otomí population in the state, because a large number of Otomí speakers are settled today in the capital Querétaro.
Table 8.3 Otomí Population in indigenous households\textsuperscript{5} by municipality in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipio</th>
<th>Población total</th>
<th>Población indígena</th>
<th>% respecto al municipio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Querétaro Arteaga</td>
<td>1,596,139</td>
<td>41,091</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amealco de Bonfil</td>
<td>56,457</td>
<td>18,261</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolimán</td>
<td>29,963</td>
<td>9,529</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Querétaro</td>
<td>734,139</td>
<td>7,229</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadereyta de Montes</td>
<td>57,204</td>
<td>1,995</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan del Río</td>
<td>208,462</td>
<td>1,936</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corregidora</td>
<td>104,218</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezequiel Montes</td>
<td>34,729</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalpan de Serra</td>
<td>22,025</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tequisquiapan</td>
<td>54,959</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Marques</td>
<td>79,743</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro Escobedo</td>
<td>56,553</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colón</td>
<td>51,625</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arroyo Seco</td>
<td>12,493</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landa de Matamoros</td>
<td>18,905</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peñamiller</td>
<td>17,007</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinal de Amolos</td>
<td>25,325</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huamalapan</td>
<td>32,720</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Joaquín</td>
<td>7,654</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Source: SEDESU, Anuario Económico, 2006: 80}

As shown in Table 8.2, the major Otomí areas are the highlands in the municipality of Amealco (\textit{Sierra Queretana}) and the semi-desert in the municipalities of Tolimán, Cadereyta, Colón and Peñamiller. Excluding the urban center of Querétaro, which is not a traditional Otomí area, the population of the highlands and the semi-desert represents around 70\% of the entire Otomí population in the state. The following map shows the geographic distribution of Otomí speakers in the state of Querétaro plus that of other minority groups such as Pame and Huastec settled in a few villages in northern \textit{Sierra Gorda}, with a population of 1035 speakers in 2005.

The Otomí dialects of Santiago Mexquititlán and Tolimán are spoken in the municipalities of Amealco (highlands) and Tolimán (semi-desert), respectively. These communities concentrate the majority of Otomí speakers in their respective municipalities: 18,261\textsuperscript{6} and 8,529 speakers, respectively. The Otomí population in these municipalities is distributed over 142 \textit{barrios} or counties. Otomí speakers in rural communities show a traditional pattern of scattered settlement, especially in Tolimán. In the semi-desert area 9,055 speakers live in 72 barrios with less than 250

\textsuperscript{5} The table includes people from households whose head and/or his/her partner speak the indigenous language. It includes small numbers of Pame and Huastec speakers representing 3\% of the population.

\textsuperscript{6} For the Otomí population of Santiago Mexquititlán between 1970 and 1986, see Hekking 1998: 21.
inhabitants (SEDESU 2005: 80). This type of settlement is common to most Otomí communities in central Mexico and exerts a major influence on the process of dialectalization.

Map 8.1 Languages spoken in the state of Querétaro, central Mexico.

The overall number of Querétaro Otomí speakers corresponds to 0.4% of all indigenous speakers in the country (Ortiz Álvarez 2005: 61). While this percentage supports Hekking’s idea about the size of the speech community as a factor influencing language shift, it is clear that Otomí speakers represent the overwhelming majority of indigenous people in Querétaro. Comparatively, speakers of Hidalgo Otomí are more numerous (110,043) but coexist with a larger Nahuatl population (221,684). Also, the number of Otomí speakers in the state of Mexico is five times (104,357) larger than the number of Otomí speakers in Querétaro but the former live together with a medium-size population of Nahuatl speakers (55,802).
and a large-size population of Mazahua speakers (113,424). The degree of language loss is higher in Querétaro even though Otomí is the only indigenous language spoken in the state. In neighboring states where Otomí is spoken along with other indigenous languages, the degree of language loss is lower. The statistics prove that it is not the size of the speech community which co-determines the loss of the indigenous language but the influence of nonlinguistic factors such as socioeconomic status and lower ethnic self-identification.

Language shift and loss in the Otomí population is reflected in the rates of monolingualism and bilingualism. In the last sixty years the bilingual indigenous population of Mexico has shown a steady increase in absolute figures, with a corresponding decrease in the number of monolingual speakers. The percentage of monolinguals from the total population of indigenous speakers was 52\% in 1930 but only 16\% in 2000. The percentage of bilinguals increased for the same period from 48\% to 84\%. According to Ortiz Álvarez (2005: 66), the indigenous languages with the largest number of monolinguals belong to the Mayan family (31\% of the total ethnic population). In contrast, Otomanguean languages show the lowest numbers of monolinguals (e.g. 5.4\% Otomí monolinguals). At the same time, the bilingual population of Otomanguean languages showed the highest percentage (26.8\%) in 2000. Bilingual indigenous speakers of Otomí and Spanish were 267,409 for the same year. In general, the number of bilingual men is two times larger than the number of bilingual women, and the number of monolinguals increases with age.

These figures can be correlated to the geographical mobilization of speakers (migration). In this case the migration of Otomanguean speakers is one of the largest. Still, Ortiz Álvarez (2005: 90) identifies a double tendency for Otomí speakers. These continue to be concentrated in the states of Hidalgo, Mexico and Querétaro but also migrate in small numbers to non-traditional areas in the states of Baja California Sur (3.2\%), Zacatecas (2.1\%), Yucatan (1.4\%) and Chihuahua (1.2\%). While these percentages show that Otomí migration is comparatively low across states, they do not include the large numbers of Otomí immigrants to the capital cities of their respective states. The cities that attract seasonal Otomí immigrants in the state of Querétaro are Cadereyta, Ezequiel Montes, San Juan del Río and Querétaro City. Furthermore, migration to several destinations in the United States is important nowadays, especially among the Otomí speakers of Hidalgo. Otomí speakers of Querétaro and Mexico prefer regional migration over international migration (Barrientos López 2004: 14).

\footnote{That demographical factors do not necessarily influence language maintenance is demonstrated by the average yearly growth rate of the indigenous population in Querétaro (2.2\%) for the ten-year period between 1990 and 2000. This rate is much higher than the rates for Hidalgo (0.7\%) and Mexico (1.4\%) (Ortiz Álvarez 2005: 46f).}
Interestingly, the effects of regional and international migration on the maintenance of the indigenous language are different. While regional migration implies shift to Spanish and the eventual loss of the indigenous language – if migration is permanent – international migration has encouraged Otomí speakers to agglutinate in political, organizational and interest groups which promote the use of the indigenous language as a symbol of ethnic identity (Alcántara Beatriz 2006: 27f). Paradoxically, international migration contributes to language maintenance. This is explained by the diglossic situation of indigenous languages and Spanish in Mexico. Outside their communities, Otomí people in Mexico speak their language only in domestic settings and prefer Spanish in all other socio-communicative spaces. In contrast, the third language used in non-Spanish speaking countries like the United States does not lead to shift but leaves the door open to the use of the group’s language as an agglutinating symbol of identity. This use is not viable in Mexico, where the indigenous language is considered culturally alien and marginalized.

While Otomí is still widely spoken in community spaces such as religious services, meetings, schools and households, the number of speakers from the total Otomí population has decreased dramatically over the last years as a result of an interrupted transmission of the language from older to younger generations and the side effects of formal schooling and literacy. The Valley of Mezquital in Hidalgo and the Semi-Desert in Querétaro report a growing number of young people who do not speak Otomí or speak it only in domestic spaces. This has caused a functional reduction of the indigenous language and its reduction to fewer spheres. The expected result is that passive speakers become semi-speakers and eventually Spanish monolinguals (Mendoza Rico et al 2004: 9ff; Alcántara et al 2004: 27f). Schooling and literacy also influence language practices and lead to language shift. For the states of Hidalgo, Mexico and Querétaro, the literacy rates are over 75% (cf. Moreno Alcántara et al 2004: 51; Barrientos López 2006: 31; Mendoza Rico et al 2004: 47). There exist programs of bilingual education in Otomí and Spanish, especially in the state of Hidalgo, whose bilingual schools have become leaders in the field and a model for the Otomí communities from other states. Nevertheless, the presence of Spanish in the schooling system remains dominant, and the inclusion of the indigenous language is justified inasmuch as it facilitates the learning of Spanish and literacy in this language. Besides, most parents are unwilling that their children be taught in Otomí, because of the low prestige of this language and the idea that its use hinders the learning of Spanish. In this context, the best efforts of bilingual teachers fall on fruitless soil. In the Otomí villages of the semi-desert area and the highlands of Querétaro several efforts have been made in order to set up a bilingual education program for elementary school, but resistance from parents themselves has influenced decisively the success of the program.
Two additional problems related to bilingual education can be identified for Querétaro Otomí. One is that teachers who speak other dialects (mainly Mezquital Otomí) have been hired to solve the lack of well-trained bilingual teachers in Querétaro, with the expected result that dialectal differences interfere in the teaching-learning process. The interference issue is even more problematic because there is no standardized spelling for all Otomí dialects, and the differences between the spelling systems are numerous. This lack of normativity in writing makes Otomí literacy a real challenge for pupils and teachers.

It is necessary to stress the fact that in spite of a comparatively large number of Otomí speakers, the language shows clear signs of a decreasing vitality, accompanied by shift and loss in several Otomí communities, which remain ethnically self-identified as Otomí after the demise of their language. A widespread process of linguistic borrowing is accompanied by higher levels of bilingualism in the Otomí population.

8.1. The history of Otomí

Otomí history has been obscured by a historiographical tradition that depicts Otomí people as savage and backward in comparison with the major civilizations of central Mexico (e.g. Toltecs, Aztecs). Many historical events in which the Otomí people played a central role have been obliterated from the historical record due to a Nahuatl-centered historiographic tradition that tends to downplay the contributions of other ethnic groups of pre-Columbian Mexico. Today, scholars from different fields such as linguistics, history, archeology and anthropology begin to recognize the central role played by the Otomí in the history of Mesoamerica. The following account of Otomí history is therefore based on the works of scholars who have made an effort in each of their disciplines to unveil the Otomí past (e.g. Soustelle 1937; van de Fliert 1988; Galinier 1990; Wright Carr 1997; Hekking 1998; Lastra 2007).

According to Soustelle (1937: 470) the Otomí are associated to the oldest demographical strata in pre-Columbian Mexico. The ancestors of the Otomí and other Otopamean peoples migrated to central Mexico from either of two areas: 1) the territory of the present state of Oaxaca, with the largest concentration of languages of the Otomanguean family; or 2) the territory of today’s Veracruz on the Mexican Gulf, known by chroniclers as Nonoualco and associated to the first historical culture in Mexico, the Olmecs (Soustelle 1937: 448). Neither hypothesis has been thoroughly demonstrated by archeological facts however. Still, historical records and

---

8 When writing this section, the author was informed that a standardized spelling system for all Otomí dialects had been approved and waited for a regulatory framework for its implementation (Hekking and Ángeles Gonzáles, p.c.)

9 A similar bias prevails in Andean historiography in favor of the Inca and in detriment of other ethnic groups.
glotto-chronological evidence show clearly that the present Otomí territory was not populated originally by speakers of this language, and that Otomí presence is explained by migration waves to the central plateau from the south or the east of Mexico in the first century of the Christian era.

Otomí speakers played a decisive role in the development of the multi-ethnic city-state of Teotihuacán during the five hundred years from its inception ca. 300 A.D. to its fall in the eighth century (Lastra 2007; Wright Carr 1997). The end of Teotihuacán implied the ethnic re-organization of the social space in central México. As a result, some groups re-settled uninhabited areas in the central valleys while others gathered to form independent chiefdoms, the most important of which was the Toltec city-state of Tula in the present state of Hidalgo. The area in and around Tula was populated by Otomí peoples before the entry of Nahuatl-speaking Toltecs (Soustelle 1937: 451). The presence of Nahuatl speakers in central Mexico is late in comparison to that of other ethnic groups, especially Otomanguean. The successive migrations of Nahuatl-speaking groups from the north of Mexico to the central plateau unchained a process of acculturation in which the newcomers became gradually integrated into the Mesoamerican culture and adopted many of its material and scientific developments (van de Fliert 1988: 43). The archeological record shows that the Otomí played a crucial role in the development of the urban center of Tula and the building of an extensive trade and ritual network in the area. With the fall of Tula around the late twelfth century, the influence of Nahuatl-speaking groups in central Mexico increased gradually until the end of the fourteenth century. The Otomí chiefdoms of Chapa de Mota and Jilotepec flourished in the northwestern part of Mexico State, the southern part of Hidalgo and the southern portion of Querétaro (van de Fliert 1988: 44). Nicknamed by chronicles as the “Otomí kidney”, this area concentrated the largest part of the Otomí population before the Spanish Conquest. Today it remains the core area of Otomí influence.

With the birth of the Aztec empire around 1376, all ethnic groups inhabiting the valley of Mexico and neighboring areas came under its rule. The Nahuatl rulers of Texcoco found no resistance from the Otomí centers of Otumba, Tepotzotlan and Tulancingo, but the Nahuatl kingdom of Azcapotzalco annexed the Otomí chiefdom of Jilotepec only after several battles. As Soustelle (1937: 463) explains, the attitude of the Nahuatl invaders towards the Otomí population was not the same in all cases. Texcoco rulers maintained good relations with their Otomí subjects and let them remain in their areas of occupation. On the contrary, the Aztecs of Azcapotzalco imposed hard taxing conditions on their vassals and expelled Otomí groups from their traditional territories. By the first half of the fifteenth century most Otomí cities and chiefdoms were under Aztec rule. The only exceptions were the Otomí who lived in the highlands of today’s state of Veracruz and the Otomí people of Tlaxcala, who preserved their independence in exchange of military services to the Aztecs. The harsh subjection to which most Otomí peoples fell victim through the
dispossession of their traditional lands may explain their support to the Spaniards during the conquest and during the first century of colonization.

The sociopolitical events on the central plateau since the emergence of the Nahuatl kingdoms in the fourteenth century resulted in new patterns of settlement among ethnic groups, with important consequences for the ethnolinguistic configuration of the area. The increasing political presence of Nahuatl chiefdoms resulted in the expansion of their language over central Mexico. In turn, the effect of the forced displacement of Otomí peoples was the emergence of two discontinuous Otomí-speaking areas separated by a Nahuatl-speaking land. The reshaping of the linguistic landscape of central Mexico did not result from shift but from military occupation and expelling of former inhabitants. Where Nahuatl peoples coexisted pacifically with speakers of other languages, bilingualism was the rule and the expansion of Nahuatl did not occur at the expense of other languages. Nahuatl-Otomí bilingualism was widespread in the central and northern areas of the present state of Mexico (Soustelle 1937: 477), where most Otomí speakers were concentrated at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Unlike the eastern and southeastern areas of the plateau, the central area was continuous and not interrupted by Nahuatl, although speakers of this language were scattered all over the area and most Otomí were competent in Nahuatl as well. A similar multilingual situation was that of the Toluca valley (the western part of the central plateau), where Otomí coexisted with other Otopamean languages and with Nahuatl in some villages of the southern valley (e.g. Coatepec, Texcaliacac). The northern part of the central plateau including most of Querétaro state, northern Hidalgo, and Guanajuato was beyond Aztec influence, being the home land of nomadic groups of the Otopamean family (i.e. Pame and Chichimec). The role played by Otomí peoples in the conquest and the colonization of the northern part of the central plateau deserves special attention.

Long years of hard taxing and the uprooting from their homelands strengthened in most Otomí groups the hatred towards Nahuatl-speaking invaders. These feelings were rapidly noticed by the Spaniards and used for their own purposes. Even the Otomí people of Tlaxcala, unconditional allies of the Aztecs, after a few battles with the Spaniards, realized that they could use the newcomers to make the Aztec rulers pay off old debts. The Otomí became thus the best allies of the Spaniards in their conquest of Mexico, providing them not only with soldiers but also with all kinds of supplies even in the hardest moments. Moreover, with Otomí assistance the Spaniards initiated the colonization of the silver-rich area to the north of the Mexico valley (the present states of Guanajuato and Zacatecas). On account of the strategic position of their territory, which connects the valley of Mexico to the northern area dominated by the bellicose Chichimecs, the Otomí were the most helpful allies of the colonizers. Their position was even more strategic because the Otomí shared with the Chichimecs a number of cultural traits originated in their common ancestry (their languages belong to the Otopamean family) and old relations of trade. Unlike
most Spanish towns which later became large cities, Querétaro was founded by a Christianized Otomí Indian, who worked also as a peace-maker for the Spaniards in northern Hidalgo. Similarly, Otomi speakers were present in the foundation of the oldest towns in the state of Querétaro (e.g. Tolimán in 1532) but also in neighboring Guanajuato (e.g. San Miguel Allende in 1547). Moreover, Otomí leaders and their people participated actively in the colonization of the Chichimec territory for one hundred years, albeit their success was partial. The territory came under full Spanish control only in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Spaniards carried out the systematic extermination of Chichimec and Pame Indians. The survivors were grouped in towns for the Spaniards to benefit from their workforce.

The immediate effect of the conquest of the Chichimec territory was the expansion of the Otomí language to the north of its traditional area, that is, to the present state of Querétaro and to northern Hidalgo. A further effect was the emergence of bilingual towns in which Otomí was spoken along with Chichimec or Pame (Tolimán was one of these multilingual centers). In contrast, a simultaneous recession of the Otomí language from the core of the central plateau occurred as a result of three factors: 1) the use by most missionaries of Nahuatl in the evangelization of indigenous peoples; 2) the moving of Otomí people from their traditional area in the central plateau to the north for the colonization of the Chichimec territory; and 3) the moving of Nahuatl Indians from different parts of central Mexico to former Otomí areas to work in agriculture and mining activities. The ‘Nahuatlization’ of the central plateau was further encouraged by the traditional Otomí-Nahuatl bilingualism of the area before the Spanish conquest. Many of the existing Nahuatl-speaking towns in the Valley of Mexico were originally Otomí three or four hundred years ago. A recent case of Nahuatlization among Otomí speakers is the enclave of Ixtenco (Tlaxcala) where the shift to Nahuatl is virtually completed.

The Otomí migration to territories north of the valley of Mexico resulted in the dislocation of the once compact Otomí area in the central plateau and the following dialectalization. In the state of Querétaro (but also in a large portion of Hidalgo) the process of dialectalization speeded up since the late seventeenth century through the progressive encroachment of Otomí lands by an increasing number of Spanish haciendas formed in the fertile valleys at the expense of Indian territory. When the Otomí failed to defeat the Chichimec, they became ‘useless’ for the Spanish Crown and lost many of their benefits. The conditions were then set for the expropriation of Otomí lands, which were taken over by ranchers, miners and hacienda owners.

---

10 Santiago Mexquititlán was founded around 1520 by Spanish settlers who sought to facilitate the trade of land staples and the improvement of tax collection in the area (van de Fliert 1988: 53).
and the displacement of Otomí elites from the urban centers. The outcome of these events was the recession of Otomí to their present areas of in the semi-desert region in northern Querétaro (Tolimán) and the southern highlands (Amealco) of the state. Both areas became niches of refuge in which the indigenous language could survive after the Otomí were expelled from the cities and their lands taken over by the Spaniards. The semi-desert and the highlands had been previously colonized by the Otomí through different processes: while the semi-desert was settled during the colonization of the Chichimec territory, the southern highlands were populated as an extension of the Otomí traditional area in the northern part of Mexico State (Jilotepec). The dialects differences between these areas result from distinct demographic compositions (e.g. the presence of non-Otomí indigenous groups), the urbanization process led by nearby cities, and the urban migration of Otomí speakers. Prieto and Utrilla (1997: 33ff) maintain that the Otomí of Amealco (southern highlands) is closer to the variant spoken in northern Mexico state while the Otomí of Tolimán and Cadereyta (semi-desert) is similar to the variant spoken in Hidalgo (Valley of Mezquital) with some Chichimec substratum. Finally, the Otomí of San Idelfonso is similar to the varieties of Tolimán and Cadereyta, but it lacks Chichimec substratum (Hekking, p.c.).

The historical events just described suggest that the uniformity of the Otomí language has considerably diminished in the last centuries, but that there are ethnic Otomí groups that remain culturally distinct even if they have lost their language in favor of Spanish (cf. supra). The corollary is that present Otomí groups are more culturally than linguistically homogeneous. Nevertheless, we should recall that Otomí groups have received cultural influences from Otopamean and Nahuatl speech communities as a result of their coexistence in the cultural sprachbund of Mesoamerica. This influence led Wright Carr (1997: 2) to pose the question of the Otomí cultural unity in the following terms:

“It is wise to ask ourselves whether the Otomís have been, in different moments of their history, a linguistic group, a cultural group, an ethnic group, or a mixture of these variables. Their linguistic identity is obvious: the Otomís are the speakers of a set of closely related
languages which come from a proto-Otomí language spoken several centuries ago in central Mexico. The existence of an Otomí culture is less obvious: since long time ago Otomí speakers have inhabited various geographical settings and mixed with other linguistic groups. In modern times, the ethnic integration of the Otomí people has been fostered on the basis of their language] (Wright Carr 1997: 2; my translation).

8.2. The dialects of Otomí

The dialectal diversification of Otomí and the fact that intelligibility is seriously reduced between certain varieties has led some authors to consider Otomí a diasystem composed of different Otomí languages (e.g. Suárez 1983: xvi; Palancar 2006: 325). Positions in this respect vary from those who consider Otomí one single language composed of a number of dialects. While case studies deal with a individual Otomí dialects, there is no comprehensive description of the Otomí dialectal variation apart from the study presented by Soustelle (1937) seventy years ago. For this reason and for the systematic treatment of data in this work, the following discussion of Otomí dialects is based on Soustelle, with additional information proposed by several authors in the last years. Notice, however, a number of communities in which Otomí was still vital in the early thirties are today Spanish monolingual while others have changed as a result of urban migration.

Soustelle investigated the dialects spoken in 33 villages and their neighboring areas in seven different states, including Querétaro, Hidalgo, Mexico, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Puebla, Michoacán and Guanajuato. His work is based primarily on the analysis of phonetic-phonological variation, and secondarily on the analysis of lexical variation. Morphosyntactic variation plays no role in Soustelle’s classification because the language shows a high degree of uniformity in this field (Soustelle 1937: 212ff) and because of his assumption that changes are harder to occur in the field of grammar.

At the phonological level Soustelle identifies thirty-two parameters of dialectal variation (1937: 191f). The most important are: a) the voiced-voiceless distinction in stops; b) the full or partial occlusivity of stops; c) the fricativization and glottalization of stops; d) vowel alternation, especially the variation between /a/ and /o/ and between /e/ and /i/. For Soustelle, the parameters of voicing, occlusivity and glottalization are the primary criteria for dialectal classification. In contrast, vowel alternation is less consistent and should be considered a secondary factor of variation. In a similar way, distributional criteria such as the syllable-initial position of phonemes do not vary systematically across dialects. From his analysis of the foregoing criteria in thirty-three localities, Soustelle identifies seven distinct dialectal areas (Soustelle 1937: 203). Geographically, these areas are:
I. The state of Querétaro and part of Guanajuato
II. The central valleys of Hidalgo and southeastern Sierra Gorda
III. The area of Jilotepec in northern Mexico, and the Otomí enclave of Michoacán
IV. The plateau of Ixtlahuacan, the Otomí enclave of Amanalco in the highlands astride Mexico and Michoacán
V. The south portion of Sierra de las Cruces and the adjoined plateau
VI. The eastern slopes of the central plateau in Hidalgo, and the southern Toluca Valley
VII. The plateau of Tlaxcala on the slopes of the Malinche volcano

Querétaro Otomí – including the dialects of Santiago Mexquititlán and Tolimán – is part of the first dialectal area (Group I). A number of Otomí-speaking localities mentioned by Soustelle are today monolingual in Spanish. For example, the formerly Otomí community of La Cañada in the vicinity of Querétaro City has shifted to Spanish, and so have most communities in the municipalities of San Joaquín and Peñamiller. Today, only the communities located in the municipalities of Amealco and Tolimán have an important number of Otomí speakers. Other areas outside the state of Querétaro such as Ixtenco (VII) in Tlaxcala and San Felipe los Alzate in Michoacán have almost completely shifted to Spanish. In general, Otomí is spoken with different degrees of vitality in Querétaro, Hidalgo, (northern) Mexico and Puebla.

Wright Carr (1997: 2) proposed another classification, based on Soustelle (1937), Manrique (1969), Galinier (1987) and Lastra (1993). According to Wright Carr, the Otomí language includes four dialectal areas: 1) Western Otomí, spoken from the Valley of Toluca through the Valley of Mezquital up to Sierra Gorda, corresponding in Soustelle’s classification to groups I, II III and V; 2) Eastern Otomí, spoken in the eastern mountains of Sierra Madre, corresponding to Group IV; 3) Tilapa Otomí, in the southeastern portion of the Toluca Valley, part of Group VI; and 4) Ixtenco Otomí, spoken in Tlaxcala and classified as Group VII in Soustelle’s division. Wright’s classification fails to make a distinction between western varieties (I, III, IV, V) central varieties (II) and eastern varieties (VI). Neither does Wright Carr account for the similarities between the varieties of the southern valley of Toluca and the eastern highlands of Sierra Madre. Wright Carr’s proposal is too broad to allow further distinctions at lower levels. The present distribution of Otomí is shown in Map. 8.2. Notice that no Otomí areas are identified in Guanajuato and Michoacán because of the dying status of the language in these states.
The specificity of Soustelle’s classification allows further divisions. While the seven groups described by Soustelle represent dialectal areas, the varieties of the thirty-three localities he studied are considered distinct dialects. An intermediate category between dialectal areas and dialects are ‘subgroups’. Soustelle finds three subgroups in Group I:

A) the Valley of Laja and the highlands of Tierra Blanca in the state of Guanajuato, where few Otomí speakers exist to date;
B) the central and southern part of Querétaro state, including the nowadays Spanish monolingual community of La Cañada and the municipality of Amealco;
C) the Sierra Gorda dialects, spoken in the northern part of Querétaro state, including the highlands from Tolimán to Jalpan and Pinal de Amoles (today Spanish monolingual), the communities of San Miguel, Tolimán, San Antonio, Higueras (Spanish monolingual) and Tetillas in the area of Cadereyta, Boyé and Sombrerete, where few Otomí speakers are reported today.

The phonological characteristics of subgroup B –including the dialect of Santiago Mexquititlán – are the absence of the fricative /θ/, the occurrence of the fricative bilabial /ɬ/, the nasal vowels /ɑ/, /ɔ/ and /ɔ/, and the collapse of variants /ɑ/, /ɔ/ and /ɔ/ in the latter. The main features of subgroup C –including the dialect of Tolimán – are those of subgroup B plus the occurrence of the fricative dental /d/.
### Table 8.4 Otomí dialects per locality, state and linguistic features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Representative Localities</th>
<th>States of concentration</th>
<th>Phonetically relevant Phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Zimapán, Tolimán, Amealco</td>
<td>Querétaro</td>
<td>Voicing, occlusivity, fricativization in equal proportions; wide vocalic variation; mixed dentilabial and palatal consonants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>El Cardonal</td>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>High occurrence of fricativized stops and labials, mixed palatals, partial occlusivity, predominant vowels ô, å, o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>San Andrés Timilpan</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Low occurrence of fricativization; no fricativized palatals; partial occlusivity in dentilabial and labial sounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>San José del Sitio</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>No fricatives, partial occlusivity in bilabial stops; predominant vowels ô, e, i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Ameyalco</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>High frequency of fricativization, especially in bilabial consonants; predominant vowels ô, e, i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Santa Ana Hueytlápan</td>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>Higher occurrence of devoicing and fricativization; wide vocalic variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Ixtenco</td>
<td>Tlaxcala</td>
<td>Low occurrence of fricativization; no fricativized palatals; diphthongization of i and e; partial occlusivity in dentilabial and labial sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excluding the first subgroup (Guanajuato), Querétaro Otomí is classified in two subdialects: the varieties spoken in the semi-desert and part of Sierra Gorda (northern part of the state) and the varieties spoken in the highlands of Amealco (southern part of the state). In roughly similar terms, Hekking et al (forthcoming) identifies four varieties of Querétaro Otomí grouped in two distinct areas: the
varieties of Santiago Mexquititlán and San Idelonso Tultepec\(^{11}\) in the municipality of Amealco; and the varieties of Tolimán and Cadereyta in the semi-desert area. According to Hekking, the variety of Santiago Mexquititlán is closer to the Otomi spoken in northern Mexico State whereas the varieties of San Idelenson, Tolimán and Cadereyta are closer to the Otomi spoken in the Valley of Mezquital in Hidalgo state. Another classification of Querétaro Otomi is presented by Mendoza Rico et al (2006: 11), who identify the variants of Amealco, Tolimán and Cadereyta while tracing linkages to the neighboring dialects in the states of Mexico and Hidalgo (cf. supra). These linkages are somewhat different from those proposed by Soustelle (1937: 204). In Soustelle’s words, “the diversification is much more noticeable in southern dialects than in northern dialects; Groups I and II [Querétaro and Hidalgo] show a high degree of homogeneity in contrast to the extreme diversity found in the southern part of the Otomi area” (Soustelle 1937: 204; my translation). In this perspective, the dialect of Tolimán is closer to the dialect of Mezquital than the dialect of Santiago Mexquititlán to the dialect of northern Mexico.

The foregoing discussion is related to the issue of the Otomi spelling systems. As mentioned above, there is no standardized spelling for all Otomi dialects. This is not surprising given the marked dialectalization of the language. Fifteen different spelling systems had been proposed for Otomi until 1999 (Zimmerman 1999: 157). For the dialects of Santiago Mexquititlán, San Idelenson, Tolimán and Cadereyta in the state of Querétaro there is a unified system since 1999. The major features of this spelling concern the vocalic system: the underlining of vowels to represent openness (ä, é, ì, ó, ú); the use of dieresis to represent nasalization (ä, ö, ä, ö); the marking of contrastive high, low and ascending tones with {`}, {´} and vowel duplication {vv}, respectively. As noticed by Hekking et al (forthcoming), the spelling conventions of Querétaro Otomi are similar to those developed in the state of Hidalgo. Empirical evidence of the cross-dialectal applicability of this spelling is that teaching materials have been developed with this spelling since 1999 outside the state of Querétaro. The use of a spelling system for various dialects has received additional support from linguists working on the Highland Otomi of Hidalgo (Group V), who use the same spelling as the one of the Valley of Mezquital (Group II). These developments show an emerging consciousness among Otomi speakers but also the fundamental unity of the language across its dialects.

\(^{11}\) For Soustelle (1937: 184, 199) the Otomi variety of San Idelenson is a “rather particular dialect” spoken only in this village but understood by speakers of Huichapan, Chanpantongo and San Luis in Hidalgo state. He groups San Idelenson in the dialectal area of Jilotepec corresponding to northern Mexico state.
8.3. (Querétaro) Otomí: a typological characterization

The following typological description assumes that Otomí dialects belong to one and the same language. Accordingly, it is expected that most, if not all, of the typological features discussed hereunder apply to any Otomí variety regardless of its geographical distribution or sociolinguistic situation. At the same time, it is necessary to insist that this fundamental unity does not obliterate dialectal differences, which occur at all levels of the language. On the basis of this assumption the typological characterization that follows is based largely on the dialect of Santiago Mexquititlán. Three reasons substantiate this choice: first, half of the Otomí corpus for this investigation was collected in this locality; second, the existence of grammatical descriptions and dictionaries for this dialect helps us provide a trustworthy account of the language; and third, it is clear from the previous dialectal discussion that the dialect of Santiago Mexquititlán is representative of Querétaro Otomí. In order to highlight differences from, and similarities to, neighboring dialects, I make use of grammatical descriptions available for other varieties. In the following I refer to the language as ‘Otomí’ in general and use the terms ‘Querétaro Otomí’ when making claims about particular features of this dialect. The following description assumes the language as spoken in the present and do not presuppose any pre-contact situation unless otherwise specified.

Otomí belongs to the Otopamean branch of the Otomanguean family. According to Suárez (1983: xvi), of twenty-four languages that make up the Otomanguean family, seven form the Otopamean branch. The geographical distribution of the Otomanguean family is limited to central and southern Mexico, but the internal differentiation is the largest of all Mesoamerican families. Accordingly, Suárez (1983: 26) considers Otomanguean not a family itself but something like a “hyper-family” or “stock”. The differentiation within the Otopamean branch is just as great: Otopamean languages have a range of differentiation similar to the one attested in the Mayan language family (Suárez 1983: 26). In fact, several authors consider Otomí not a language but a group of languages forming a diasystem.

The phonological inventory of Otomí is rather complex, and it is there that Otomí dialects differ most from each other. Querétaro Otomí has thirty-four phonemes, including ten vowels, two semi-consonants, and twenty-two consonants. In addition to the five vowels of Spanish (/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/), the language has two central vowels (/ã/, /õ/), two open-mid vowels (/ɛ/, /ɔ/) and one nasal vowel in allophonic variation (/āl ~ /āl/). Hekking (1995: 30) notes that other dialects show a larger number of nasal vowels. Highland Otomí (Hidalgo state), for example, has five nasal vowels (Voigtlander and Echegoyen 1985) while the Otomí dialect of San José del Sitio (Mexico state), has nine nasal vowels, one for each oral vowel (Soustelle 1937: 129-181). Bartholomew (1968) points out that nasalization across
Otomí dialects is irregular in high vowels in comparison to low vowels. The corollary is that every Otomí dialect shows at least one nasal vowel for any of the following oral segments /a/, /e/, /o/, /i/, /u/. In contrast, nasal high vowels vary across dialects and is absent in certain varieties (e.g. Santiago Mexquititlán). The inventory of consonant sounds in Querétaro Otomí includes: sixteen phonemes similar to their Spanish counterparts (/p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, /g/, /f/, /s/, /x/, /m/, /n/, /l/, /n/, /l/, /l/, /l/), two semi-consonants (/w/, /y/), the glottal stop /h/, the glottal fricative /h/, three apical sibilants /j/, /ts/, /th/, and one palatal sibilant /ʃ/. Like other neighboring dialects, Querétaro Otomí does not show vowel harmony.

In Soustelle’s classification the Otomí of Santiago Mexquititlán (henceforth Santiago Otomí) belongs to subgroup B (Amealco) of the dialectal area I (Querétaro). Soustelle described several features for this area (cf. Table 5.15) and the respective subgroup (cf. supra). Let us see now whether these are confirmed by the aforementioned phonological inventory. The occurrence of voiced and voiceless stops in Santiago Otomí where other dialects show only voiceless segments confirms the voicing tendency identified by Soustelle for group I (1937: 198f). The glottalization of stops and the realization of full occlusivity described as typical of group I are also confirmed for Santiago Otomí. In contrast, the wide range of variation in the vowel system is not attested, because vowels show fixed phonetic values. Of the features proposed for subgroup B, the occurrence of the fricative bilabial /f/ and the absence of the fricative dental /f/ are confirmed for Santiago Otomí. On the contrary, the existence of three nasal vowels and the collapse of /a/, /o/ and /i/ into /o/ are disconfirmed: this dialect has only one nasal vowel /õ/ in allophonic variation with /ã/, and only the first two vowels occur as allophonic realizations.

Three sounds did not occur in Classical Otomí: the alveopalatal affricate /ɛt/, the trill /tʃ/, and the lateral /l/. While these sounds occur all in Spanish loanwords, they occur in native forms too (Hekking 1995: 31). For example, ts’aki is realized as [tʃ’aki] in Santiago Otomí. The existence of the alveopalatal affricate and the lateral in Nahuatl suggest also the origin of these sounds in the contact of Otomí with this language.

The most salient feature of Otomí suprasegmental phonology is the tonal system. The language has three tones: one high, one low, and one ascending. Tones are marked in writing only if contrastive. Non-contrastive tonal realizations depend on style or register as well as on phonetic environments. Nasalization is generally considered a distinctive segmental feature on vowels but suprasegmental processes involving nasalization are well known. Soustelle identified a widespread phenomenon of prenasalization involving segments /l/ and /d/ in the dialect of San Jose del Sitio. Both sounds become [nt] and [nd] in word-initial position. Grammatical descriptions of Santiago Otomí do not refer to prenasalization, but clusters [nt] and [nd] occur in native forms and assimilated loanwords with /l/ and
/d/ in word-initial position. Hekking and Bakker (2007) find no evidence of contact-induced changes in tone, vowel and consonant harmony, but no reference is made to suprasegmental phonology.

Syllables in Otomí are typically open (CV) but other patterns are frequent as well. I have found no explicit reference to syllable number for Santiago Otomí. Nonetheless, an analysis of the corpus shows that the description of San Jose del Sitio (Soustelle 1937: 135f) is fully applicable to Querétaro Otomí: accordingly, the frequency of consonant-vowel monosyllables is high, but this does not mean that Otomí is a typical monosyllabic language – in fact, most words are disyllabic (CVCV). Consonant clusters are frequent in onsets but not permitted in coda position. Onsets of type NCC result from prenasalization as explained above (e.g. ni'udi). Alien clusters have been introduced in Otomí from Spanish, especially the stop-flap onsets /kt/, /pt/ and /ks/. Similarly, restrictions across syllabic boundaries have been changed by Spanish loanwords: e.g. ektarya ‘hectare’, septyembre ‘September’, with non-Otomí clusters /kt/ and /pt/ (Hekking and Bakker 2007). The stability of alien clusters depends on the age of the loanword and the degree of bilingualism of the speaker.

The introduction of new sounds and syllabic patterns through loanwords has not provoked major changes in the phonological inventory of Otomí, simply because a large number of loanwords are accommodated to the native system (cf. section 10.1.3). Comparing the phonological inventory of present-day Otomí with the inventories of Paraguayan Guarani (5.3.3) and Quichua (5.2.3) provides further evidence for this claim. Given that contact-induced changes in the phonological system of a recipient language are directly related to the number of unintegrated loanwords, Otomí is the least influenced of the three languages not only in terms of number of loanwords but also of frequency of assimilation. The next section tests this correlation on the corpus of each language.

Morphologically, Otomí shows a split typology consisting in a mixture of synthetic and analytic structures (Hekking 1995: 5; Hekking and Bakker 2007). The split morphology of Otomí corresponds to the types of morphemes in the language. Querétaro Otomí has two types of bound morphemes: proclitics and affixes. Affixes, the great majority of which are suffixes, are part of verbal morphology while proclitics fit either in verbal or nominal paradigms. Other authors (Soustelle 1937: 143ff; Andrews 1993) consider proclitics true prefixes on the basis of their cross-syllabic coalescence in all Otomí dialects. According to Soustelle (1937: 138) any monosyllable preceding or following a polysyllabic word merges with the latter in pronunciation. Since proclitics are monosyllabic, they are expected to lose their phonetic shape by merger. Neither Hekking (1995) nor Hekking and Bakker (2007) provide counterevidence to Soustelle’s claim. I prefer the term ‘proclitic’ because
most grammatical sketches of Querétaro Otomí use this term and the current spelling writes proclitics as separate forms.\footnote{Further evidence for the analysis of these forms as proclitics is that modifiers occur between proclitics and nouns: e.g. \textit{ar=ditãi}, \textsc{DEF.S=tall}, ‘the tall one’, \textit{ar=na-data}, \textsc{DEF.S=very=tall}, ‘the very tall one, the giant’.
}

Hekking and Bakker (2007) maintain that Otomí shows a synthetic structure at the level of the phrase but an analytic structure at the level of the sentence. A few examples from (Hekking 1995) illustrate this. Consider the following noun phrases.

1) \textit{Ár=ngú ar=Xuwa}  
3.POSS=house DEF.S=Juan  
‘Juan’s house’

2) \textit{Ma-ngú-hu}  
1PL.POSS=house-INCL  
‘Our house’ (first person inclusive)

3) \textit{Yá=wa ar=tsa’yo}  
3PL.POSS=foot DEF.S=dog  
‘The dog’s feet’

4) \textit{Da=r=nuxutsi-ga}  
PRS.1=DEF.S=girl-EMPH.S1  
‘I am a woman’

5) \textit{Hin=d=ar ‘bghñã}  
NEG=PRS.1=DEF.S woman  
‘I am not a woman’

Proclitics are ubiquitous in the noun phrase. They indicate definiteness and number, but also person, negation, tense and aspect. Number marking is made exclusively through proclitics, since there are no plural markers. Gender is not grammaticalized in Otomí but signaled lexical, when necessary, through the nouns \textit{tsu} ‘male’ and \textit{ndo} ‘female.’ Possessive proclitics are another type of adnominal particles. Possession is the only syntactic relation that can be marked in the noun phrase (1-3). If a noun is used predicatively as in (4-5), the noun phrase carries the same tense and aspect markers of verbs. Otomí is not a head-marking language in the noun phrase: all markers are attached to the proclitics while the noun head usually occurs bare. Exceptions are the clusivity markers attached to the head noun when preceded by possessive proclitics (2).
In the following examples noun phrases in subject position appear in square brackets.

6) \[Ar=Mändo\] \(mi=ňä\)-\(wi\) \(ár=nänä\)
   DEF.S=Armando  IMPF.3=speak-DUAL  3.POSS=mother
   ‘Armando spoke with his mother’

7) \(Bi=pä-hya\) \(da=ot\)-\(ya\)
   PRS.3=know-EMPH.3PL.PROX  FUT.3=write-EMPH.3PL.PROX
   ‘They know how to write’

8) \(Di=ne\) \(ga=fax\)-\(i\) \(ar=xudi\)
   PRS.1=want  FUT.1=help-OBJ.2  DEF.S=tomorrow
   ‘Tomorrow I want to help you’

9) \[Ya=mępyę\] \(um-bi\) \(ar=ňňuni\) \(ya=mbane\)
   DEF.PL=porter  give-BEN  DEF.S=mole  DEF.PL=godfather
   ‘The porters give mole to their godfathers’

10) \[Ma=’txu\] \(bu\)-\(se\) \(j=ár\) \(ňăni\) \(ar=ňñe\)
    POSS.1=grandmother  live-REFL  LOC=POSS.3 side  DEF.S=river
    ‘My grandmother lives by herself at the riverside’

11) \[Nugö\] \(di=’bu-kwa\)
    PRO.1  PRS.1=be.LOC-PROX
    ‘I am here’

The marking of syntactic relations between arguments of the predicate is done through proclitics, suffixes and a few prefixes. Proclitics play also a major role in the verb phrase: they mark person, tense and aspect (Hekking 1995: 47). There are seven types of verbal suffixes: markers of number and clusivity (6); emphatic markers (7); markers of direct object (8); 4) markers of indirect object (9); markers of reflexivity-limitativity (10); and markers of location (11). In principle all of these suffixes can be attached to a verb root at the same time. Hekking (1995: 50) notes however that suffixes usually are not more than two. Hekking quotes the following example (12) as an extreme case of agglutination in Otomi: four suffixes attached in a predetermined order to the verb root hongi ‘to look for’.

12) \(Bi=hong-a-wi-tho-wa\)
    PRS.3=look.for-OBJ.1-DUAL-LIM-LOC-PROX
    ‘He/she looks for us only (around) here’
The verb phrase in traditional Otomí is relatively complex in morphological terms. It may include several inflectional affixes, as illustrated in (80). It differs therefore from the noun phrase, which shows a slightly higher degree of analyticity. While the structure of the verb phrase is similar to Classical Otomí, deviant cases such as (13) and (14) are reported too.

13) Ya=mepte un=ar
    DEF.PL=porter give=DEF.S
    nhñuni ne ar=sei yá=mbane
    mole and DEF.S=pulque POSS.3PL=godfather
    ‘The porters gave mole and pulque to their godfathers’

14) Yá=meni xi=’ygt’u ’nar=mixa pa ya=hkwete
    POSS.3PL=relative PRF.3=make INDEF.S=mass for DEF.PL=forebears
    ‘Their relatives gave a mass to the forebears’

Hekking (1995: 37f) mentions three ways to express the relation between the predicate and the indirect object: 1) through the verbal suffix -pi or any of its variants; 2) through simple juxtaposition, if the semantic relation is implicit in the meaning of the verb; or 3) through the Spanish preposition pa (from para ‘for’). The first alternative is illustrated in (9) above. The second alternative is exemplified in (13). Finally, the third alternative is illustrated in (14). The use of Spanish prepositions in Otomí is prolific and has changed the native ways in which phrasal constituents are related. Example (15) shows the use of the Spanish preposition con ‘with’, instead of the Otomí instrumental marker.

15) Ma=tada bi=daki ar=mgti ko ár=ndajwai
    POSS.1=father PST.3=attack DEF.S=animal with POSS.3=machete
    ‘My father attacked the animal with his machete’

Summing up, Otomí shows a split morphological type according to which verb phrases are more complex than noun phrases. Relations between arguments often remain implicit. Arguments are traditionally juxtaposed in a fixed order. The use of Spanish prepositions is a recent development in the Otomí verb phrase.

The next issue has to do with the type of Otomí at the level of the sentence. Otomí shows the greatest level of analyticity at this level. This is shown in its tendency to asyndetism and juxtaposition. Hekking and Bakker (2007) summarize the sentence structure of Otomí in the following terms:

“At the sentence level the structure is more analytical, and it is not uncommon to find asyndetic compounding and bare juxtaposition of
constituents, with very few explicit markers of the semantic or syntactic relations, such as adpositions, conjunctions and subjunctions between constituents. As a result the meaning at the clause level must often be deduced from the meaning of the main verb or from the context” (Hekking and Bakker 2007: 339)

The following examples include complex-verb, subordinated, coordinated and relativized constructions, characterized all by asyndetism. Let us begin with complex-verb constructions.

16) \(\text{Ar=bātsi} \quad \text{bi=zapi} \quad \text{nda=dets’e} \quad \text{j=ar} \quad \text{zā}\)

DEF.S=child PST.3=try PST.3=climb LOC=DEF.S tree

‘The child tried to climb up the tree’

17) \(\text{Hi-mi} \quad \text{ne’u} \quad \text{n-da=tsi} \quad \text{ar=sei}\)

NEG-PST.3 want-EMPH.3P.DIST.2 PST-FUT.3=drink DEF.S=pulque

‘They were not going to drink pulque’

Juxtaposition is the preferred strategy in complex-verb constructions. The verbs ‘try’ and ‘want’ are auxiliaries and their relation to the main predicate is not mediated by connectors. Consider now the following examples of clausal coordination.

18) \(\text{Ga=fu} \quad \text{x-ka} \quad \text{ne} \quad \text{ga=yok-a}\)

FUT.1=plow.for.sowing-EMPH.1 and FUT.1=fold-EMPH.1

‘I plow for sowing and turn the soil upside down’

19) \(\text{Ya=goxthi} \quad \text{ya=zá} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{ya=bojá}\)

DEF.PL=door DEF.PL=wood or DEF.PL=metal
tx’utho ya=’ndi pgets’i ya=nhñe

few DEF.PL=time have DEF.PL=glass

‘The doors are (made) of wood or metal and seldom have glass’

In (18) the clauses are coordinated by \(\text{ne} \ ‘\text{and’}\). Other particles used for coordination are ‘nehe ‘too’ and \(\text{ne’nehe} \ ‘in addition’. In contrast, the clauses are coordinated by simple juxtaposition in (19). Hekking (1995) does not mention which strategy is preferred, but his statement that complex sentences usually lack connectors suggests that asyndetic constructions are the unmarked choice. Subordination constructions are exemplified below.

20) \(\text{Ar=bātsi} \quad \text{bi=znoni} \quad \text{bi=ntsā’i} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{nts’editho}\)

DEF.S=child PST.3=cry PST.3=burn SUPL hard-LIM

‘The child cried because he burned painfully’
Examples (20) to (22) illustrate different types of subordination: (20) indicates a causal relation between two events; (21) refers to the anteriority of one event with respect to another; and (22) signals simultaneity of events. None of the above constructions makes use of connectors to link the subordinate clause to the main clause. Instead, (20) and (22) use simple juxtaposition while (21) has a proclitic of tense in the subordinated clause to indicate anteriority to the main clause. Notice in (21) the fusion of the Spanish preposition con ‘with’ and the proclitic of definiteness and singular number -r. To the foregoing strategies for subordination Hekking adds a number of connective particles to express causality (ngetho, jange), comparison (tengu, ngu, jangu), simultaneity (nä’ä) or finality (ma). The clauses headed by these particles are all adverbial. The next examples illustrate subordinate relative clauses with and without connectors. Relative clauses are bracketed.

23) 
\[ Buí xingu ya=ngú be.3 much DEF.PL=house \]
\[ hinti pegs’i ya=nso gi pa=r dehe nothing have DEF.PL=key for=DEF.S water \]
‘There are many houses which do not have stopcock for water’

24) 
\[ Ya=ts’udi tsi ya=män saná DEF.PL=pig eat DEF.PL=apple \]
\[ nu’u tagi ndezu ja=r zá DEM-PL.PROX fall from LOC=DEF.S tree \]
‘The pigs eat the apples that fall from the trees’

25) 
\[ M-besinu-ga xi-ku-ga enä POSS.1-neighbor-EMPH.1 say-OBJ.1-EMPH.1 say \]
\[ hindá ‘wá’y=ar njega] NEG-FUT.3 rain=DEF.S year \]
‘My neighbor told me there will be no rain this summer’
Adjectival subordinate clauses, equivalent to relative clauses in many Indo-European languages, are not linked to the main clause by connectives in traditional Otomí. Known as “the gapping strategy” (Comrie 1989: 147f), this mechanism of juxtaposition makes no reference to the antecedent in the relative clause. This is illustrated in example (23). Adjectival subordinate clauses are headed also by particles for deictic reference (24) which include nu‘ā, nā‘ā, ge‘ā, nu‘y and ge‘u as well as interrogative to. A further strategy is the use of a Spanish preposition.

Subordinate clauses in reported or indirect speech are not linked to main clauses by connectives. Instead, they use finite verb forms such as embi ‘say.3S.DAT’ or enā ‘say.3S’ (25). The following examples show complex sentences in which the subordinate clause indicates the purpose of the main clause.

26) \( Kā \ j=ar \ nijä \ ot‘u=ar \ rosaryo \)
   walk.down LOC=DEF.S church make-DUAL.INCL=DEF.S rosary
   ‘They walk down to pray the rosary’

27) \( Ngōtho=r \ pa \ pgn=arXuwa \)
   all-DEF.S day leave-DEF.S Juan
   ma bi=gx=ya jwä
   for PRS.3=hunt=DEF.PL fish
   ‘Juan left (home) the whole day to fish’

Again, juxtaposition (26) and connective particles (27) are the typical strategies for subordination. According to Hekking (1995: 45), classical Ottoman does not mark final clauses (purpose) if their subject is co-referential with the main clause, but marking is obligatory if otherwise.

The influence of Spanish is changing the typological structure of Otomí considerably through the increasing use of prepositions and conjunctions. A few examples of this use in hypotactic constructions demonstrate this sufficiently.

28) \( Ga=eh-e \ j=ar \ nijä, \)
   FUT.1=come-PL.EXCL LOC=DEF.S church
   [pa ge da=hā=ar majä]
   for that FUT.2=speaker-DUAL.INCL=DEF.S priest
   ‘We will come to the Church for him to speak to the priest’

---

13 Notice that adjectival clauses in Otomí are always post-nominal. See Hekking and Bakker (2007) for further explanations.
Spanish connectors are varied in Otomí. Hekking identifies twenty-two different Spanish connectors in his corpus, some of which occur more frequently than others. The most frequent by far are *pa* (short form of Spanish *para* ‘for’) and its compound forms (e.g. *pa ge*) as illustrated in (28), followed by others like *como* ‘as’ and *porque* ‘because’ (29). Less frequent is the Spanish conjunction *que* ‘that’, which heads dependent (adjectival) clauses (30). The occurrence of Spanish connectors in everyday speech has modified the way Otomí marks syntactic relations in the sentence.

Compared to the noun phrase, the sentence shows more analytical structures. Syntactic relations are expressed asyntactically by means of juxtaposition or syntactically by deictics, proclitics, adverbial particles, Spanish prepositions and conjunctions. The ongoing shift from juxtaposition to connectivity through native particles or borrowed prepositions makes contemporary Otomí more hypotactic than classical Otomí. The final outcome of this shift might be the loss of verbal suffixes from colloquial speech (Hekking 1995: 155ff). Chapter 11 gives a detailed analysis of prepositional and conjunctural connectivity in contemporary Otomí.

What about constituent order in Otomí? Possession in Otomí follows a possessed-possessor order while attributive modification a modifier-head order. The order of adjectival (relative) clauses in complex noun phrases is post-nominal. Compared to the fixed VOS word order of classical Otomí, the modern language shows other alternatives, in particular a tendency towards SVO. For the Otomí of Santiago Mexquititlán, Hekking (1995: 36) identifies SVO as the basic word order while the same order is prevalent in the Otomí of San Andrés Cuxcontitlán in the state of México (Lastra 1994). In contrast, Suárez (1983: 95) identifies Otomí as a VOS language on the basis of Highland Otomí (Hidalgo). Soustelle, in turn, classify Otomí as a typical VSO language on the basis of the Otomí spoken in San Jose del Sitio (Mexico State). Because there is no comprehensive study of syntactic variation across dialects, we cannot make any generalization upon a solid empirical basis. Still, one tendency is clear in Querétaro Otomí: the increasing frequency of SVO order as compared to VOS or VSO orders. Compare SVO examples (7), (13), (16), (20), (21) and (24), with VSO examples (23) and (27).
Few issues in Amerindian linguistics prove as controversial as the identification of parts of speech. The classification of parts of speech in Ecuadorian Quichua and Paraguayan Guaraní showed this clearly. The reasons for the failure of most grammatical descriptions to properly identify parts of speech lie on a long tradition that makes use of linguistic categories proper to Western European languages. In addition, there is the influence of other factors such as a) a process of dialectalization which makes invalid for one dialect what is valid for another; b) the influence of Spanish at the lexical and grammatical levels; and c) the fact that lexical categories in some Amerindian languages make subtler distinctions than those used in most European languages. For Otomí all these factors conspire intricately and make conclusive statements unsustainable. Therefore, the typological classification of parts of speech elaborated in the following should be considered a tentative proposal awaiting further study. Most of what is said here is not new, except for the way it is said. The analysis is based on previous work on the topic by several authors (cf. Soustelle 1937; Voigtlander and Echegoyen 1985; Lastra 1992; Hekking 1995; Palancar 2006; Bakker and Hekking 2007; Bakker et al 2008). Of these sources, particular attention will be paid to Palancar (2006), who deals specifically with parts of speech in Otomí.

From the start it is hard to establish a clear-cut division between verbs and nouns in Otomí. Most nouns can be used predicatively without any mechanism of derivation. Soustelle explains this special feature of Otomí in the following terms:

“The distinction between nouns and verbs is very uncertain and hard to capture. As far as form is concerned, we should point out that most words might be both nouns and verbs. Therefore, a large number of words do not tell us whether they are nouns or verbs only by their form. In fact there is only one much-reduced class of nouns that can never be used as verbs. These are the nouns carrying the nominalizer prefix t-. […] However, it is hard to make a clear noun-verb distinction even in the case an allegedly nominal prefix is present” (Soustelle 1937: 165; my translation).

I maintain that it is perfectly possible to make a distinction between nouns and verbs in Otomí on the basis of morphological distribution. The following arguments support this view.

Otomí verbal morphology consists basically of proclitics and suffixes. Proclitics mark person, tense and aspect. Suffixes mark number, inclusive-exclusive

---

14 Purely syntactic criteria are less helpful to identify lexical classes in Otomí, for word order patterns vary across dialects and a number of pragmatic and discourse factors intervene.
distinctions, emphasis, location, comitativity, direct object and indirect object. Verbal proclitics are distinct from nominal proclitics in that the latter indicate definiteness and number. Both types of proclitics are not interchangeable. Nominal proclitics do not precede verbs just like verbal proclitics do not precede nouns. In contrast, verbal suffixes occur on verbs but also on nouns. They include the markers of number, clusivity, location and emphasis. Nouns in predicative function are always marked by one of these suffixes, which they share with verbs. On the contrary, suffixes marking comitativity, locativity, direct and indirect object do not occur on nouns (Bakker et al. 2008). The following examples from Hekking (1995) illustrate the aforementioned distribution of proclitics and affixes. Verbal proclitics and suffixes appear in bold.

31) \( Ar=xudi \quad ga=pg \quad ma=xorg \)
DEF.S=tomorrow FUT.1=sell POSS.1=guajotole [turkey]
‘Tomorrow I will sell my guajolote’

32) \( Ar=ts'ignt'u \quad da=yapi \quad ar=ye \quad ar=nxutsi \)
DEF.S=bridegroom FUT.3=ask.OI.3 POSS.3=hand DEF.S=bride
‘The bridegroom will ask the bride’s hand for marriage’

33) \( Bì=mända-wi \quad 'nar=he'ni \quad ar=amigo \quad Enrike \)
PST.3=send-DUAL INDEF.S=letter POSS.3=friend Enrique
‘He sent a letter to his friend Enrique’

34) \( Di=kut'a-hu \)
PRS=five-INCL.PL
‘We are five’

35) \( Ar=Xuwa \quad mi=ña-wi \quad ar=to \)
DEF.S=Juan IMPF.3=speak-DUAL POSS.3=mother-in-law
‘Juan was talking with his mother-in-law’

In sum, while most nouns can be used predicatively, they still make a class of lexical elements different from verbs according to the distribution of morphemes. In other words, nouns and verbs in Otomí cannot be grouped in one indistinct class of flexible elements.15 Still, both lexical classes are open to the extent that new members enter through borrowing or compounding (cf. infra).

---

15 Notice that a similar distribution of parts of speech was found in Guaraní, where nouns make a lexical class separate from verbs but still can be used predicatively.
Notwithstanding the relevance of a noun-verb distinction for any classification of parts of speech, several authors maintain that the major issue in Otomí concerns the existence of adjectives (Soustelle 1937: 165; Palancar 2006: 28; Bakker et al 2008). The remaining part of this section focuses on the discussion of this lexical class.

According to recent studies, lexical items classified as ‘adjectives’ in most European languages belong to either nouns or verbs in Otomí, depending on morphosyntactic criteria. Implicit in this proposal is the aforementioned distinction between nouns and verbs. Let us first have a look at noun-like adjectives, i.e. adjectives showing nominal morphology. This morphology includes not only the proclitics of definiteness and number, which some authors call ‘articles’ (e.g. Hekking and Andrés de Jesús 1984; Hekking 1995) but also the verbal proclitics used on nouns with predicative function. In the following examples the proclitics gar, ar and ya accompany lexemes encoding property concepts such as nduxte ‘naughty’ and junt’ei ‘jealous’:

36) a. \( g=\text{ar} \) nduxte  \\
    PRS.2=DEF.S naughty
  
    ‘Your are naughty’

b. \( \text{ar}=\text{nduxte} \)  \\
    DEF.S=naughty
  
    ‘The naughty person’

37) \( \text{Ya}=\text{junt’ei} \)  \\
    DEF.PL=jealousy

  \( \text{mi}=\text{tsq} \)  \\
    IMPF.3=feel

  \( \text{m}=\text{ar} \)  \\
    IMPF.3=DEF.S pain

  \( \text{’nyu} \)  \\
  ‘Jealousy hurt him’

38) \( \text{Ar}=\text{’noho} \)  \\
    DEF.S=mister

  \( \text{i}=\text{bi}=\text{zu} \)  \\
    PRF.3=PST.3=scare

  \( \text{ni} \)  \\
    nor

  \( \text{’nar}=\text{pa} \)  \\
    INDEF.S=day

  \( \text{bi}=\text{mengi} \)  \\
    PST.3=return

  \( \text{bi}=\text{’neme} \)  \\
    PST.3=believe

  \( \text{=junt’ei} \)  \\
    DEF.PL=jealous

  ‘The guy was so scared that he never felt jealous again’

Noun-like adjectives are accompanied with proclitics indicating person and tense (gar), number and definiteness (ar, ya). According to Palancar (2006: 347), there are twenty different noun-like adjectives in Otomí. Most, if not all, of these lexemes refer to properties attributable to human beings. Property-concept nouns behave like other nouns in that they are not linked to their subject noun phrases by a copula if used predicatively. Because the language does not use copulas for non-verbal

---

16 Soustelle maintains that it is difficult to distinguish nouns from verbs in Otomí but insists that property concepts are encoded either as nouns or verbs (Soustelle 1937: 165).

17 No equivalence exists. The most important difference between these nominal proclitics and articles is that nominal proclitics are obligatory with determiners, quantifiers or interrogative pronouns (Hekking 1995: 57f).
predication, property-concept nouns should be thus considered denominal verbs rather than adjectives per se. Consider the following example from San Idelfonso Otomí (Palancar 2006: 349):

39) No=r ja’i ar=günt’ei
   DEF=S person DEF.S=jealous
   ‘The man is jealous’

40) Ga’tho nu ma=míxi ya=nduxte
   all DEF.PL POSS.1=cat PRS.3PL=naughty
   ‘All my cats are naughty’

A parallel class of property-concept lexemes in Otomí is that of verb-like adjectives. Palancar classifies this class as part of a larger class of stative verbs distinct from active verbs according to morphological parameters. For example, the third-person imperfect proclitic for active verbs is mí, but the same proclitic for stative verbs is már (Palancar 2006: 333f). This partition applies to all Otomí dialects, although it is not clear what members make up the class. Palancar mentions that “the verb jóhyá ‘be glad’ is one of a very few active verbs in Otomí that depict PCs [property concepts]” (Palancar 2006: 336). In contrast, Hekking and Bakker (2007) assign the same lexeme to the class of intransitive verbs along with others like daghi ‘be ill’ or txu txu ‘be small’. In the following examples of jóhya a resultative-state reading is obligatory for (41) whereas a present reading is required for (42). Notice also the different use of tenses: past in the first sentence, present in the second.

41) Ná ma=nóno xa hi=n-jóhyá
   DEF POSS.1=mother Int PST.3=NI-be.glad
   ‘My mother got very glad’
   (Palancar 2006: 336)

42) Di=johya-he
   PRS.1=be.happy-EXCL.1
   ‘We are happy’ (and not ‘we become happy’)

In consideration of additional morphological criteria, Palancar makes a further distinction of verb-like adjectives in two subclasses. The first subclass is characterized by its overlap with active verbs as regards inflection. Palancar lists eleven of such verbs: e.g. dotá ‘be big’, tx’úlo ‘be small’, or tsg’h’ho ‘be strong’, nzáhto ‘be beautiful’, rá’yo ‘be new’, txu ‘be old (for a man), etc. The great majority of lexemes from this class refer to human characteristics, like noun-like adjectives. Similarly, the members of this subclass vary from dialect to dialect. For instance,
Hekking classified rá’yo ‘be new’ (cf. supra) rather as a property-concept noun. Consider the following example:

43) Nuya ya=’be ts’i hingi ya=’ra’yo
   DEM.PROX.PL DEF.PL=thing NEG-PRS.3 DEF.PL=new
   ‘These things are not new’

Differences in classification are observed in other lexemes such as dötá (San Idelfonso) or dütä (Santiago Mexquititlán) ‘be big’. Palancar classified dötá as a property-concept verb whereas Hekking classifies the same lexeme as a noun.

The second class of verb-like adjectives is an open class. Adjectives borrowed from Spanish become members of this class. Palancar (2006: 337) characterizes this class on the basis of four morphosyntactic peculiarities: a) their argument is encoded with object morphology; b) they receive a morphologically conditioned nasal prefix; c) they use a special set of function words; and d) they lack a morphosyntactic bound form.

The coding of arguments with object morphology is the most salient feature of verb-like adjectives. In Otomí, verbal suffixes marking patients (direct objects) in transitive verbs mark experiencers in intransitive verbs. The same suffixes occur on verb-like adjectives. According to Palancar, this feature makes verb-like adjectives similar to stative verbs and “reveals that Otomí has an active/stative split involving intransitive verbs” (Palancar 2006: 338). The following examples from Hekking and Bakker (2007) and Palancar (2006) illustrate this morphological feature of Otomí. Verbal prefixes appear in bold.

44) a. Xi=nis’u’t’i-gi
    PRF.3=thin-OBJ.1
    ‘I am thin’

   b Xi=nis’u’t’i-’i
    PRF.3=thin-OBJ.2
    ‘Your are thin’

45) Xi=nhëts’i-’i
    PRF.3=be.tall-OBJ.2
    ‘You are tall’

The second feature of verb-like adjectives consists in the occurrence of a morphologically conditioned nasal prefix: /n-/ in (44a-b) and /ñ-/ in (45). Palancar

---

18 This nasal prefix has the same form as the corresponding prefix of nasal intransitive verbs. Compare examples (112), (113) and (109).

19 Otomí would be, therefore, similar to Guaraní in this respect (cf. section 7.3).
considers this prefix a verbal marker of stativity, which does not occur on verbs of the active type.\(^{20}\)

The third feature consists in the occurrence of the verbal proclitic \(x\) before verb-like adjectives in present tense. Notice that this proclitic encodes perfectivity on other verbs. This means that verb-like adjectives describing a present state of affairs require perfect morphology instead of null morphology as other verbs. The fourth feature of verb-like adjectives acting as stative verbs is the lack of a bound form. The absence of such form in the vast majority of stative verbs draws a divide between them and the rest of verbs, which always have two forms, free and bound (cf. Palancar 2004).

Verb-like adjectives are used also as modifiers of referential phrases. Hekking and Bakker (2007) give some examples of this use. Compare the following examples:

46) \(Ar=\text{hets'\textquotesingle}}\) \(\text{'noho}\)
    DEF.S=tall \(\text{man}\)
    ‘The tall man’

47) \(Ar=\text{ts'\textquotesingle}}\) \(\text{ntsi}\)
    DEF.S=thin \(\text{girl}\)
    ‘The thin girl’

For authors like Voigtlander and Echegoyen (1985), Lastra (1992), Andrews (1993), and Hekking (1995), these examples are instances of nominal modification, according to which the lexemes attributing a quality or property to the head noun should be considered adjectives. Palancar parts company with these authors because he considers constructions like (46) and (47) instances of nominal compounding. The first (dependent) element of these compounds is a property-concept verb and the second element a noun. Other compounds are formed only by nouns. The difference between noun-noun compounds and verb-noun compounds lies on the semantics of the dependent element. In the first case this element specifies the function or the source indicated by the second element, whereas in the second case the dependent element expresses a property of the entity referred to by the nominal element. Palancar shows that both types of compounds have similar characteristics: a) they are head nouns in nominal predication; b) they have morphologically adjusted forms; c) they are new lexemes; d) they occur in lexical pairs; and e) they show restrictions concerning internal modification. (Palancar 2006: 353). In example (48)

---

\(^{20}\) An alternative interpretation is that they are denominal verbs, i.e. nouns derived into transitive verbs by the nasal prefix. The resulting verb form would have two arguments: an impersonal zero subject and a recipient (Dik Bakker, p.c.).
below the noun-noun compound 'bots’e-hmé basket-tortilla or ‘basket for tortillas’ is
a head noun in nominal predication. The same status is given to verb-noun
compound 'bó-míxi be.black-cat or ‘black cat’ in (49):

48) Nú ná=r 'bots’e ar='bots’e-hmé
DEF DEM=S basket DEF.S=basket-tortilla
‘This basket (here) is a tortilla-basket’

49) No ma=míxi hínge ar='bó-míxi
DEF.S POSS.1=cat NEG DEF.S=be.black-cat
‘My cat is not black’ (literally, ‘my cat is not a black cat’) 

Verb-noun compounds usually insert a nasal infix between the dependent element
and the head. In addition, they have a suppletive bound form which occurs
exclusively in compounds. In principle, all property-concept lexemes, be they
verbs or nouns, may form compounds with other lexemes and create novel words.
However, not all lexical combinations are possible, which, according to Palancar,
“serves as another important piece of evidence that such lexical combinations should
be treated as compounds, and not as adjectives, in syntactic attribution” (Palancar
2006. 357). Verb-noun compounding is the most productive type and includes
property-concept verbs of the first class. In contrast, because stative verbs are
limited to lexical conventions, their compounding is less productive. On the other
hand, Palancar notices that the combination of more than one dependent member in
verb-noun compounds is grammatical but hardly found in colloquial speech. Further
restrictions on compounds concern internal modification: compounds may be
modified internally only by intensifier rá-, a prefix attached to the whole compound,
not to either of its elements; similarly, limitative -thó modifies property-concept verbs
but not stative verbs in a verb-noun compound.

In view of the foregoing arguments, Palancar concludes that 1) nouns and
stative verbs encode property concepts in Otomí, and 2) nouns and verbs referring to
property concepts form compounds with other nouns and produce novel lexical
items. An inspection of the Otomí corpus collected for this investigation
demonstrates that similar constructions occur in Santiago Mexquititlán and Tolimán
dialect and that differences consist in the different membership of some lexemes to

---

21 Also, noun-noun compounds have suppletive bound forms different from their free
counterparts. The free form of déhe ‘water’ contrasts with its bound form -thé in compounds
such as dóthe ‘river’. The difference is that suppletive bound forms may also occur in
constructions other than compounds.
one or another class. In sum, Otomí has no adjectives, only rigid verbs and a number of flexible and inflexible nouns.\textsuperscript{22}

A lexical class left aside so far is the class of (manner) adverbs. Of the Otomí adverbs listed by Hekking (1995: 54), only two function as modifiers of predicate phrases: \textit{nts'edi} ‘strongly’ and \textit{nihi} ‘quickly’. Interestingly, they can also modify referential phrases. This is illustrated in the following examples.

50) \'Nar=nts'edi uñä mi=tekwe ár=mfeni
INDEF.S=strong headache IMPF.3=waste POSS.3=brain
'A strong headache exhausted his brain'

51) Di=ne ga=pehni nuna ar=he’mi
PRS.1=want FUT.1=send DEM DEF.S=paper
'mehni j-a=r 'mehni ngut'ä
send.PTCP LOC=DEF.S post quick
'I want to send this letter by express post’ (lit. by quick post)

52) Pente ar=ndähi bi=ndu bi=jwihni
Suddenly DEF.S=wind PST.3=begin PST.3=blow
nts'edi j=ar 'rani
strongly LOC=DEF.S bridge
'Suddenly the wind began to blow strongly over the bridge’

53) Ba=ehe ngut'ä
IMP.2.EGO=come quickly
'Come quickly over here’

Clearly, the same lexeme can be used in adjectival and adverbial function\textsuperscript{23} without any kind of derivation. Lexemes of this type are few and form a closed class. They cannot be used as heads of referential phrases (nouns), but they can be used as heads

\textsuperscript{22} Palancar postulates the existence of a small class of ‘acategorial lexemes’ These are bound forms expressing property concepts and occurring only in verb-noun compounds. These bound forms include only \textit{t'úlo-} ‘small’, \textit{dö}, big, and \textit{m'ó} ‘blue’. The strong resemblance between these forms and property-concept verbs points to a diachronic relation between both classes. Palancar maintains that Classical Otomi have a closed lexical class of adjectives, the remnants of which are the aforementioned bound forms (Palancar 2006: 360).

\textsuperscript{23} Notice however the slight difference between the adjectival uses of \textit{nts'edi} ‘strong’ in (104) and \textit{ngut'ä} ‘quick’ in (106). The first lexeme occurs pre-nominally when used as an adjective while the second occurs post-nominally when used in the same function. Syntactically speaking, while \textit{nts'edi} can be used both pre-nominally and post-nominally depending on its adjectival or adverbial function, \textit{ngut'ä} is used only post-nominally regardless of its function. Arguably, this difference in syntactic behavior may be ascribed to the different subclasses of property-concept items.
of predicate phrases (verbs). Accordingly, they could be classified as instances of property-concept verbs, with an additional adverbial function. The use of stative verbs as modifiers of predicate phrases supports this classification. Consider the following examples:

54) \( ts\_a \ x_i=h\_no \)
   feel    PRF.3=good
   ‘it feels good’

55) \( Hm\_\_a \ ar=apyo \ pets\_i \ xingu \ ya=nzaki \ x_i=h\_no \)
   IMPF:say  DEF:S=celery  have much  DEF.PL=life  PRF.3=good
   \( pa \ da=ts\_i \ ne \ hm\_\_ \ ge \ ar=\_nithi \)
   for  FUT.3=IMPF.eat  and  IMPF:say  DEM  DEF.S=medicine
   ‘It is said that celery has a lot of good nutritional substances and is medicinal’ (lit. ‘It is said that celery has a lot of good life for eating…’)

In (54) the stative verb \( h\_no \) modifies the predicate \( ts\_a \) ‘feel’. The verb form modifies the noun \( nzaki \) ‘life’ in (55). The position of this lexeme like that of \( ngut\_\_a \) in (51) is post-nominal. This position suggests that the adjectival function of these lexemes is not prototypical but an extension of their predicative function. Alternatively, \( x_i \ h\_no \) can be interpreted as a subordinate clause, hence its post-nominal position.

Summing up, Otomí distinguishes nouns from verbs but lacks adjectives and adverbs while using morphosyntactic strategies instead. Property concepts are encoded either by nouns or verbs and form compounds with other nouns. Stative verbs are used as modifiers of predicate phrases.

According to the theory of parts of speech proposed by Hengeveld (1992) and Hengeveld et al (2004), languages that distinguish two contiguous lexical classes may be flexible (Type 2) or rigid (Type 6). Flexible languages show one class of verbs and other of non-verbs, the last class encompassing nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Quichua and Guaraní are this type of languages. Otomí is different from them in several aspects. First, the use of nouns as modifiers of referential phrases is limited to a closed class of nouns in noun-noun compounds. Second, nouns cannot be used as modifiers of predicate phrases. Third, adjectives correspond to a subclass of verbs (stative verbs).24 Fourth, while nouns can be used as heads of predicate phrases, they make a lexical class different from verbs. And fifth, the role played by verbs in the modification of phrases in Otomí suggests a clear resource to morphosyntactic strategies. All this demonstrates that Otomí is a rigid language of

---

24 The existence of a small number of adjectival (bound) forms - remnants of a former lexical class of adjectives, according to Palancar – is insufficient to hypothesize the existence of a closed class of adjectives in Otomí, as typical of rigid languages with an intermediate parts-of-speech system (Type 5/6).
type 6, i.e., it distinguishes nouns and verbs as separate lexical classes while using 
morphosyntactic mechanisms for nominal and verbal modification.

Two caveats are required however. One is that the classification of parts of 
speech elaborated in this section is based mainly on dialects of the Querétaro area 
and should be restricted only to Querétaro Otomí. The other is that the above 
classification of parts of speech describes present-day Otomí. This stipulation is 
important since the language has experienced changes as a result of contact with 
Spanish in the four last centuries and these changes may increase with bilingualism.

8.4. Borrowing hypotheses for (Querétaro) Otomí

The language-specific hypotheses presented in this section are tested in Chapters 10 
and 11 on the Otomí corpus collected in Santiago Mexquititlán and Tolimán. The 
hypotheses involve predictions about frequencies, types and functions of Spanish 
borrowings in the corpus. They are based on the hierarchies discussed in section 4.3 
concerning a) the principle of functional explanation; b) the principle of system 
compatibility; c) the scales of borrowability; and d) the theory of parts of speech. 
The numbers correspond to those in section 4.3.

Predictions from the Principle of Functional Explanation

H.1 Querétaro Otomí will borrow Spanish discourse elements easier than non-
discourse elements.

H.1.1 Querétaro Otomí will borrow from Spanish discourse elements such as 
topic and focus markers but evidentials and connectors.

Predictions from the principle of system compatibility

H.2 Considering the morphological type of Spanish (inflectional), Querétaro 
Otomí (synthetic in phrase, analytic in the sentence) will borrow from 
Spanish (fusional) free words and roots, but neither clitics nor bound 
morphemes.

Predictions from the scales of borrowability

H.3 Querétaro Otomí will borrow lexical elements easier than grammatical 
elements.

H.3.1 Querétaro Otomí will borrow items from open lexical classes (e.g. nouns) 
easier than items from half-open (e.g. prepositions) and closed classes (e.g. 
articles).

H.3.2 Querétaro Otomí will borrow Spanish lexical items in the following order 
of frequency: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Adpositions (i.e. 
prepositions) will be borrowed, if at all, less easily because Querétaro 
Otomí does not have a syntactic slot for them, unless a gap-filling strategy 
is involved (cf. 2.6.2.2). Pronoun borrowing will be disfavored by the pro-
drop character of Spanish. Articles may be borrowed to the extent that a
syntactic slot for them is available in the language. Conjunct borrowing is no expected, other things being equal.

Predictions from the theory of parts of speech

H.4 The typological distance between Spanish (source language) and Querétaro Otomí (recipient language) is bridged in the borrowing process following the hierarchy of parts of speech: head of predicate phrase > head of referential phrase > modifier of referential phrase > modifier of predicate phrase.

H.4.1 Accordingly, Spanish forms that function as heads of phrases (i.e. verbs and nouns) will be borrowed easier than forms that function as modifiers (i.e. adjectives and adverbs). Also, Spanish forms that function as heads of predicate phrases (i.e. verbs) will be the most easily borrowed lexical class; forms that function as modifiers of predicate phrases (i.e. manner adverbs) will be the hardest class to be borrowed. While H.4.1 contrasts with H.3.2 above, both hypotheses will be tested.

H.4.2 If Querétaro Otomí borrows items from one lexical class, it borrows items from previous lexical classes in the hierarchy. Accordingly, if Querétaro Otomí borrows modifiers of referential phrases (Spanish adjectives), it will borrow heads of referential and predicate phrases too (Spanish nouns and verbs) but not necessarily modifiers of predicate phrases (Spanish manner adverbs).

H.4.3 As a rigid language, Querétaro Otomí will borrow more easily lexemes from the lexical class immediately following the last differentiated lexical class in its parts-of-speech system. Therefore, Querétaro Otomí will borrow adjectives more easily, because adjectives are the lexical class that follows the last differentiated class (nouns) in its system.

H.5 The syntactic distribution of borrowed lexemes in Querétaro Otomí will follow the same distribution of native lexical classes (functional adaptation hypothesis). Accordingly, if Querétaro Otomí borrows Spanish nouns and verbs, it will use them as heads of referential and predicate phrases, respectively. In turn, if adjectives and adverbs are borrowed, they will be used either as nouns or stative verbs. In addition, Spanish nouns might be used alternatively as verbs given the same use of native nouns in Querétaro Otomí. Therefore, Spanish borrowing will not modify the system of parts of speech in Querétaro Otomí.

H.6 The distribution of borrowed lexemes will follow the same distribution of their lexical classes in Spanish (functional specialization hypothesis). Accordingly, adjectives and adverbs borrowed from Spanish will be used in Querétaro Otomí only in their original position of modifiers of referential and predicate phrases, even though the language does not have individual lexical classes fulfilling both syntactic functions (cf. infra). The functional
specialization of Spanish borrowings will thus result in a gradual
differentiation of the parts-of-speech system of Querétaro Otomí. While H5
and H6 make opposite predictions, both hypotheses will be tested.

**H.7** If Querétaro Otomí borrows adjectives and adverbs and uses them in their
original syntactic positions, a process of lexicalization will take place, by
which the language will gradually replace morphosyntactic strategies with
lexical items for the modification of referential and predicate phrases.

The foregoing hypotheses will be tested systematically on the Otomí corpus of
Santiago Mexquititlán and Tolimán in the light of linguistic and nonlinguistic factors
influencing the borrowing process (Chapters 10 and 11).