LEARNING OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN NEW SPAIN: FIRST NAHUATL GRAMMARS (16th century)

Elena Zhizhko

PhD and Doctor in Science hab., Full prof.
Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Mexico,
http://orcid. org/0000-0001-9680-8247; e-mail: eanatoli@yahoo.com

Delfina de la Cruz

EDD Student,
Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Mexico,
e-mail: celiyaz.2003@gmail.com

This work presents the results of historical-pedagogical research, whose purpose was to determine the main features of the process of indigenous languages grammars' creation in New Spain of the 16th century. These grammars served for the learning of said languages in order to evangelize the native peoples. A documentary-bibliographic study was carried out with the support of the precepts of missionary linguistics. The authors found that the comprehensive analysis of Amerindian languages begins with the arrival of the Spanish in the New World. At the end of the 16th century, the grammars of all the available languages of the colony existed, including several grammars of Nahuatl. Creating the first dictionaries, grammars, and other texts in American languages and their exhaustive study begins in the circumstances of formal linguistic treatment of European vernacular languages. The birth of the grammars of Nahuatl, Otomí, Zapotec coincides with the emergence of the arts of Tuscan, Spanish, Aragonese, French, Turkish, Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic. The authors highlight the following features of the process of Amerindian languages grammars' creating: the use of the Nebrija's doctrinal model of languages analysis; support in previous studies; the use of Spanish as a metalanguage; creation of unpublished grammatical and lexical forms; elaboration of the missionary variety of Nahuatl; the use of the contrastive method with the introduction of other languages (reference languages: Latin, Spanish, Hebrew, Greek).

Key words: linguistic education in the New Spain of the 16th century; learning of indigenous languages; first grammars of Nahuatl; analysis of American languages by Catholic missionaries; missionary linguistics.

У роботі представлені результати історико-педагогічного дослідження, метою якого було визначення основних ознак процесу створення граматик корінних мов у Новій Іспанії XVI століття. Ці граматики служили для вивчення зазначених мов з ціллю євангелізації корінних народів. Результати дослідження були отримані шляхом документально-бібліографічного дослідження та за підтримки постулатів місіонерської лінгвістики. Автори виявили, що всебічний аналіз американських мов починається з прибуттям іспанців у Новий Світ. Наприкінці XVI ст. вже існували граматики всіх загальних мов колонії, включаючи кілька граматик мови нагуатль. Процес створення перших словників, граматик та інших текстів на американських мовах, а також їх детальне вивчення розпочинається в обставинах наукової обробки європейських діалектів (так званих «вульгарних» мов). Народження посібників з нагуатля, отомі, сапотека тощо збігається з появою граматик тосканської, іспанської, арагонської, французької мов, а також мови санскриту, турецької, китайської, японської, арабської та багатьох інших мов. Автори виділяють такі ознаки процесу створення граматик американських мов: застосування доктринальної моделі аналізу мов іспанського лінгвіста Антоніо де Небріхи; спирання на попередні дослідження; використання іспанської мови як метамови; створення не існуючих раніше граматичних та лексичних форм; розробка місіонерської версії мови нагуатль; використання контрастивного методу із уведенням інших мов (так званих довідкових мов: латинської, іспанської, івриту, грецької).

Ключові слова: лінгвістична освіта в Новій Іспанії XVI століття; вивчення мов корінних народів; перші граматики мови нагуатль; аналіз американських мов католицькими місіонерами; місіонерська лінгвістика.

Introduction. From the beginning of the Spanish colonization of the Americas (16th century), the Catholic missionaries had a clear need to learn the languages of the autochthonous groups that inhabited these lands to carry out their evangelizing work effectively. Eventually, the success of their work depended on overcoming the language barrier. Knowing the languages of the natives not only facilitated the transmission of elementary Christian concepts but was also essential for the Christianization of the Indians.

The process of Amerindian languages' learning by the Catholic friars began with the literacy (transcription with Latin letters) of the Nahuatl language: "[…] the three Flemish[1] were the first to begin to write Nahuas words with Latin letters […] they would go on transcribing when they heard […] "(Kobayashi, 1974, pp. 170–173). Later, they were joined by the twelve Franciscan friars, the first to arrive in the New World to evangelize. According to Mendieta, "[…] they always brought paper and ink in their hands, and when they heard the word from the Indian, they wrote it […] In the afternoon, the religious gathered together and communicated their writings to each other, and as best they could they conformed to those Romance's words that seemed more convenient "(Kobayashi, 1974, p. 172). In this way, the friars learned Nahuatl at the beginning of their arrival.

---

[1] The three Flemish Franciscan friars are Pedro de Gante, Juan de Aora, and Juan de Tecto.

In 1536, the King of Spain gave the Instruction to the Viceroy of New Spain about the need to learn local languages: "[…] to take advantage of the conversion of the natives, it is essential that, as long as they know our language, the religious and ecclesiastical people who apply themselves to knowing their language (of the Indians) and for that they reduce it to some arts[2]".

Moreover, an easy way to learn it (Polanco, 2000, p. 12). From this decree, the missionaries showed even more zeal in learning the main vernacular languages. Thus, their rush to learn led them to develop the first grammar of the American languages.

Already in 1547, the first Nahuatl grammar, *The Art of the Mexican.[3] Language* by Fray Andrés de Olmos was created; then in 1571, *The Art of the Mexican and Castilian language* and the *Vocabulary of the Castilian-Mexican Mexican-Castilian language* by Fray Alonso de Molina; in 1578, the *Vocabulary in the çapoteca language* by Fray Juan de Córdoba; in 1595, the *Mexican art* by Jesuit father Antonio de Rincón; and in 1611, the *Manual Vocabulary of the Castilian and Mexican languages* by Pedro de Arenas.

Literature review. The problem of Amerindian languages' learning in New Spain, addressed Baudot, 1990; Bayle, 1992; Borges-Morán, 1986, Brain 2010; Briceño-Perozo, 1987; De-la-Garza, 1992; Duverger, 1996; Esteve-Barba, 1964; Gambra, 1992; Guzmán, Cervantes-Guzmán, 2012; Hernández-de-León-Portilla, 2002; 2014; Konetzke, 1972; Martinell-Gifre, 1988, 1992; Máynez, 1999; Murillo-Gallegos, 2010; 2012; Polanco, 2000; Prat-Garcïa, 1985; Suárez-Roca, 1992; Torre-Revello, 1962; among others. In particular, the topic of the first grammars and dictionaries of the Nahuatl language of the 16th century, was studied by Altman, 2005; Esparza-Torres, 2006; Flores-Farfán, 2013; Gómez-Asencio, 2001; Zimmermann, 2004; Zwartjes, James, Ridruejo, 2006, among others.

The purpose of the article. The objective of the work, which results are presented below, was to determine the main features of the process of Amerindian languages grammars' creation in New Spain of the 16th century that served for the learning of these languages in order to evangelize the native peoples, through a documentary-bibliographic study and with the support of the precepts of missionary linguistics.

Results and discussion. The creation of the first Nahuatl grammars occurs in the writing of the first European vernacular.[4] languages grammars. The *Grammar of the Castilian Language (Gramática de la Lengua Castellana)* by Nebrija (1492) is the first of Castilian and the first of a vernacular language. It is worth mentioning that the first grammar of the Tuscany language (today Italian) *Grammaticheta* by Trissino was published in 1529; the German *Ein Teutsche Grammatica* by Valentin Ickelsamer appears in 1534; the Portuguese *Gramática de Lingoagem Portuguesa* by Fernando de Oliveira was written in 1536; the French grammar *Tretté de la Grammere françoeze* by Louis Meigret comes out in 1550; and that of the English *Pamphlet for Grammar* by

---

[2] In medieval times, grammar was called art.

[3] Authors' note: it is essential to mention that the "Mexican language" was used until Independence (1810). The "Nahuatl" was a resource of the creoles and mestizos in the 19th century to impose Spanish as a language of the "Mexican" nation and not to use its vernacular language as a national language or as another national language. It is a subject that gives fabric for subsequent studies of how the name of the language was changed.

[4] Authors' note: Nahuatl and other Amerindian languages were also considered vernacular.

William Bullokar, dates from 1586 (Caro-Rivera, 2010, p. 9).

It is essential to point out that medieval Europe had a great linguistic variety (Tuscan, Castilian, Aragonese, French, and thousands of other provincial dialects) due to feudal production systems. However, grammars were reserved only for "languages of culture": Hebrew, Greek, Latin (Caro-Rivera, 2010, p. 4). According to Foucault (2002): "In the 16th century, real language is not a set of independent, uniform and smooth signs in which things would come to reflect […] It is rather an opaque, mysterious thing, closed on itself, fragmented and enigmatic mass point by point, which mixes here or there with the figures of the world and becomes entangled with them" (p. 42).

Until the Renaissance, the grammars of vernacular languages began to be written. Since in this period, the decline of the power of the Catholic Church was evident, the uprisings against the established religious doctrines turned out to be devastating for the unity of the old religious entities. The Protestant Reformation got rid of papal authority, and a new cult structure was established favouring the reading of the Bible by the parishioner, something prohibited by the Catholic Church (Lafaye, 2005, p. 308).

Thus, in the XV–XVII centuries, period of domestication and organization of language.[5], the first grammars of vernacular languages were created (around 600 grammars worldwide, from Japan to Mesoamerica: Turkish, Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Nahuatl, Aymara, Guaraní, Muisca, Arabic). In the words of Caro-Rivera (2010), this was

> *[…] The result of a successive chain of theories that see the collapse of traditional metaphysical systems protected by one language – Latin, the power of the Church and its role in shaping the new monarchical powers- and the attempt to systematize a new theory of language that is, establish a coherent order in language, find its logical bases, which reveal the functioning of thought in general, character of universal explanation of understanding, which will be the function of grammar until the advent of linguistics (p. 10).*

Luther's translation of the Bible into German, its subsequent typographical reproductions, and the extension of the reading's teaching served to establish a new relationship with the native or regional language. One of the slogans of Protestantism was that each person could have a direct relationship with God; for this, it was necessary to translate the Bible because not everyone had the means or the time to study Latin. According to Calvet (2005),

> *[…] In comparison with these noble languages (Hebrew, Latin and Greek), the vulgar languages deserve less consideration: of course, they begin to be written, but they do not have any religious guarantee: and, without a doubt, the cause in which at this point, Luther and Calvin depart from the generality, it resides in the fact that local languages, the languages spoken by the people, are taken into account by the Reformation (p. 53).*

Therefore, although in the Renaissance, the vernacular languages began to be

---

[5] Authors' note: it must be clarified that the term "period of domestication and organization of language" is used by Caro-Rivera in his works. However, it is not a term established or recognized by other authors, although many have expressed the same idea (but in other words).

considered, some of them prevailed over the others, as in the case of Castilian and other languages of the Spanish kingdom. One of Nebrija's famous phrases that later came to be assimilated to a linguistic policy is: "That language was always a companion of the empire". Following Caro-Rivera (2010),

> […] *The birth of the monarchical State (a political regime based on an aristocracy and clergy with extraordinary privileges, with a king at the head of the entire entity) was fundamental in the reason why one language began to be privileged over all others, so that be the bearer of a particular system of government that submits many underlying kingdoms* […]. *Monarchical states began to impose obedience to many territories; therefore, the court's language became the language par excellence (since the Middle Ages, the courts had become the main bastions of the cultured and upright language of a "people"). The reunification of Spain led to the establishment of a single language* (pp. 5–8).

Likewise, following the principle of "assigning importance" to a specific vernacular language and the creation, first of all, of its grammar, Nahuatl was named a *lingua franca* in New Spain. In addition, it should be noted that all these grammars (that of Castilian, Tuscan, German, Portuguese, French, English) are built from the Latin grammar model (using the Latin transcription system), which formed the basis of their phonic system and their organization. The same system was applied to indigenous languages, including Nahuatl, but with essential caveats when transcribing the works (Caro-Rivera, 2010, pp. 9–10).

Now, it is essential to clarify what grammar is. According to Lafaye (2005), grammar is one of the parts of the *trivium* and one of the liberal arts corresponding to eloquence (the other two are rhetoric and dialectic, which emphasize the use of language in all disputes, the correct ways of speaking and its systems of use). Grammars are not simple enumerations of the structure of any language but have a political and social function. An example of this function is the phenomenon of glotophagy: the process by which one language ends up subordinating and silencing another by appropriating its speakers and forcing them to use a language of which they are not carriers. Creating grammar means closing the language on itself and discovering its intrinsic characteristics (p. 346).

In addition, grammar is composed for achieving a minimum of intelligibility in communicative relationships with other cultures. In this sense, grammar clarifies the language, which was mysterious, strange, out of place. Nebrija's project was to create a teaching manual with which a foreign language could be learned. He uses comparisons with Latin, the dominant language in the Middle Ages, where the similarities emerge that make it compatible with other languages. Hence, the writing of the grammars of vernacular languages starts from the Latin grammars (Caro-Rivera, 2010, pp. 12-13).

Another important point to clarify is the process of creating the Nahuatl grammars. In general, the grammatization of many Amerindian languages began in the first decades of the 16th century in New Spain and remained in constant activity during the following centuries. However, more than that, the analysis and grammatical subjection of the two "general" languages of Mesoamerica, Nahuatl and Otomí, had already been completed around 1531, that is, ten years after the occupation of

Tenochtitlan by Hernán Cortés (Guzmán-Betancourt, 2001, pp. 33-35).

The object of a patient and deep study were several indigenous languages, some of them, thanks to the prolonged research effort, came to have printed grammars: the *Art of the Michoacán language* (Tarascan or Purépecha) (1558) by the Franciscan Maturino Gilberti; the *Grammar or art of the general language of the Indians of the kingdoms of Peru* (1560), by Dominican Fray Domingo de Santo Thomás (Hernández-de-León-Portilla, León-Portilla, 2014, p. XII). In such a way that at the end of the 16th century, the main indigenous languages of New Spain (Nahuatl, Otomí, Purépecha, Zapotec, Mixtec, Mayan) had already been the subject of in-depth grammatical and lexical analysis. Therefore, a veritable forest of linguistic and philological works can be spoken about resulting from that great effort.

Those who undertook this extraordinary work were not professional linguists because there were no one, but mainly Catholic friars who sometimes worked with native wise and sometimes with all those they wanted to convert to Christianity. Thus, the missionaries (Pedro de Gante, Francisco Jiménez, Alonso Rangel, Juan Zumárraga, among others) perceived and noted essential aspects of the Nahuatl structure while making the first attempts to adapt the Latin alphabet to represent its phonemes. One of the testimonies of this work states that: "[…] that this witness has seen written art, a page or an outline of grammar? to show the Indians read and write […] that he has seen some of the Indian write" (Hernández-de-León-Portilla, León-Portilla, 2014, p. XV).

It should be noted that before Andrés de Olmos finished his Nahuatl grammar in 1547 when he had already resided in Mexico for 19 years, Francisco Jiménez, eight years after his arrival, had written an *Art of the Mexican language*, which his companions of the Franciscan order would use. Furthermore, Alonso de Rengel, also a Franciscan, had composed another in the thirties of the sixteenth century. In the Prologue to the reader of his *Art of the Mexican language*, Olmos writes that he had considered and seen what "on the same subject […] others had written" (Olmos, 1993). In other words, he benefited from what was previously written, something that was very common in the linguistic tasks of the missionaries. Thus, these Nahuatl grammars circulated in handwritten form and served to accelerate the learning of the systematic features with communicative importance of said language, and they also served to enhance the evangelizing work of the missionaries (Breva-Claramonte, 2008, pp. 26-27).

In general, in the 16th century, five linguistic works about Nahuatl were published by different authors; all of them were arts or grammars. Two were first printed: the *Art of the Mexican and Castilian language* by Fray Alonso de Molina[6] (with two editions, the first in 1571, the second in 1576), and the *Mexican Art* by Father Antonio del Rincón (1595). Likewise, in the seventeenth century, the *Manual Vocabulary of the Castilian and Mexican languages* by Pedro de Arenas (1611), the *Mexican Art* by Fray Diego de Galdo Guzmán (1642), the *Art of the Mexican language with the declaration of the adverbs della* by Father Horacio Carochi, S.J. (1645), the *Art of the Mexican language* by Fray Agustín de Vetancurt (1673), the *Art of the Mexican language* by the bachelor

---

[6] Authors' note: interestingly, Alonso de Molina learned the Mexican language from childhood. He also participated as a translator in the first Auto de Fe in Mexico in 1535, in which the heir to the king of Texcoco (and an ally of Cortés) was burned alive for criticizing the hypocrisy of religious practices of Christianity.

priest Antonio Vázquez Gastelu (1689), the *Art of the Mexican language according to how used to speaking Indians of the entire bishopric of Guadalaxara, part of Guadiana and Mechoacán*, by Fray Juan Guerra (1692) (Guzmán-Betancourt, 2001, pp. 35-37).

In the prologue of his work *Here begins a vocabulary of the Castilian and Mexican languages* (1555) published in Mexico, Fray Alonso de Molina, displaying the importance of the salvation of the Indians, biblically justifies the urgency of mastering their language:

> *For this reason, the ministers of the faith and the Gospel should work with great care and diligence to know the language of the Indians very well, if they intend to make them good Christians: as Saint Paul says, writing to the Romans, faith is reached by hearing, and what is to be heard must be the word of God, and this must be preached in a language that listeners understand because otherwise (as Saint Paul says) the one who speaks will be considered barbarian (Molina, 2014).*

For the same reason, Domingo de Santo-Tomás, in his *Grammar or art of the general language of the Indians of the kingdoms of Peru* published in Valladolid in 1560, states: "[…] But, who knows the great and extreme need that exists in those provinces of the preaching of the Gospel, and how many thousands of souls have gone and go to hell for lack of knowledge of the things of our holy Catholic faith due to a defect in the language, without which they cannot be preached […]" (Santo-Thomas, 1995, p. 14).

Let us see below what difficulties the friars faced in the process of creating their works. Mainly, they were linguistic and cultural problems due to the differences between the Mesoamerican languages and the European ones. At first, they took notes and wrote grammar outlines, short vocabularies, and essential religious texts, which over time became more complex grammars, vocabularies and texts:

> *The language speakers did a long job since they were perceiving and distingu-ishing the phonemes of that language, their combinations and variants. In addition, as they learned their vocabulary, they had to gradually identify their morphemic features and elements and their syntactic resources, that is, the attributes of their structure. Thus, the goal was to record the lexicon register, with its version as close as possible in the language of the person doing the research, and to capture and make explicit the grammar of the other's language (Hernández-de-León-Portilla, León-Portilla, 2014, p. XIV).*

When writing their grammars, the missionaries consulted and tried to improve the works that preceded them. At the same time, the composition of these treatizes was not the result of isolated efforts, especially concerning available languages. They read not only the preceding grammars and vocabularies but also used to work as a team in their colleges and their language schools (Breva-Claramonte, 2008, pp. 31-35).

The friars created the missionary variety of Nahuatl (in the manner of ecclesiastical Latin), produced by evangelizing needs, which together with religious neologisms includes lexical items that generate inexistent forms in the language, sometimes ephemeral. To a greater or lesser extent, it is a specific linguistic variety that accommodates non-speakers or speakers of Mexican, in this case, as a second language. One of the indications of the formation of the missionary variety is the retention and insertion of certain vowels that are omitted in conversational practice (for example, *nomaopoch* contracts *nomapoch*), which indicates the predisposition of the participants in the inter-

action within the framework of the accommodation theory (Flores-Farfán, 2013, p. 28).

For several reasons, the Latin and Castilian grammars are essential elements in the composition of the grammars of indigenous languages. The European missionaries had knowledge of Latin (being the language of culture, science and the church) and some of Greek; at that time, Latin was the gateway to studying grammar, rhetoric, and logic. In Aguirre's (1983) opinion, the friars

> *[…] used the contents, structure and metaterms of Introductiones latinae (1481) by Antonio de Nebrija (1444-1532) to describe indigenous languages and com-pose their grammars. Nebrija's Latin grammar was a standard treatise in Spanish universities. In religious orders, this work was presented as a model for elaborating indigenous languages […]. Furthermore, from the inventories of the books exported from Spain to America, we know that, in the 16th cen-tury, numerous Nebrija's grammars were transported to the New Continent. For example, in 1583 and 1591, 53 Nebrija's arts were taken to Peru (Aguirre-Beltrán, 1983, p. 207).*

This doctrinal model of the languages' analysis developed in the work *Introductiones latinae* written by Spanish linguist Antonio de Nebrija, is a model "[…] of two aspects: the universal or rational aspect and the aspect of the use or manifestation of the universal in the particularisms of each language. It is the logicist model on which traditional grammar is based, which has its roots in the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and scholastic grammar; the latter suffered the influence of the Thomist theory of knowledge that separated the levels of the sensible world and the intelligible world" (Esparza-Torres, 2006, p. 33).

Nebrija's grammatical model has a utilitarian dimension since it is the model in which the missionaries have been trained. It contains a terminology known to evangelizers, who are primarily addressed by the grammars of the American languages. The authors of these are interested in composing works that are easily understood and learned by their co-religionists so that the conversion of indigenous people advances as quickly as possible (Breva-Claramonte, 2008, p. 30).

On the other hand, the conception of Latin grammar (specifically, that of Nebrija) as a model for the analysis and presentation of indigenous languages, carried out as a "norm" by an obligation of the higher instances of the Church, often produced erroneous linguistic analysis (Zimmermann, 2004, p. 16). Thus, Olmos in his *Art of the Mexican language* broadly echoes the practice of teaching Latin that Nebrija uses: assigning a dual purpose to the Romance language, derived from the distinction between direct translation (especially, though not exclusively, lists of Latin verbs with their Romance meaning) and the reverse translation (phrases in Romance from which the teacher explains the Latin construction). These direct translations and the sentences later in Latin were called "romances" (Esparza-Torres, 2006, p. 25). Thus, over time, teaching was based on developing "romances" that served as minimal grammars. Thus, Olmos explains:

> *A neat thing would be to put all the sentences in which our Romance disagrees with saying this language; I mean that the Indian.[7] does not correspond to the Castilian.*

---

[7] Authors' note: from this quote, it is concluded that by the date of creation of the *Art of the Mexican language* (1547), the generalization of the term "Indian" has already been instituted for all American groups, erasing their most apparent distinctions.

We will put some that are common and put them in the order of the main adverbs in such sentences so that the sentence we want to convert in the language is better found. Later, we will put some other extravagant Romances, and of those set here, both of them and the others, we will be wise to make another similar statement for them (Olmos, 1993, p. 171).

On the other hand, following Nebrija's example, Olmos makes the infinitive the standard way to translate the Castilian equivalent in the Nahuatl section, as well as he includes *ego* or first person singular:

All the verbs of the language will be put in the first person of the present indicative [if they have it] and if not, in the third, because this all verbs have it; and the same is always used for singular and plural, but the Romance of the verbs will be put in the infinitive, as Antonio de Lebrixa puts it in his vocabulary (Olmos, 1993, p. 5).

With this, Olmos integrates the verbal classification with the categories of Latin grammar, such as the infinitive, and introduces the linguistic classification of the Nahuatl verb, highlighting the form of the perfect. He points out that all verbs have a third person singular form, which constitutes the base form of the verb; he justifies the Nahuatl structure, separates the verb root and provides the obligatory morphology to produce a complete expression. It is worth emphasizing that it is crucial because, in Nahuatl, the standard is marked with the third person in concrete and almost visual action, not with the abstract infinitive of the action.

Therefore, Olmos resorts to grammars dedicated to other languages to verify that "technically" he is acting correctly. In Esparza-Torres' opinion (2006), this has to do with the interrelation between the doctrinal body of linguistic principles and ideas inspired by the sacred texts, which give theoretical support to the works, and the need to resort to specific grammatical sources that help to model the grammatical description of indigenous languages in the best possible way (p. 21). Olmos expresses in his *Art of the Mexican language*:

[…] we can understand St. Paul, who was transported to heaven, preaching by i.x.n. Lord and confirmed with miracles; after fourteen years of his holy preaching, he went to Jerusalem (according to revelation) with Barnaba and Titus to communicate and confer with the holy apostles the divine gospel that he preached among the gentiles: in which he no less implies that of the sage that says: nil facias sine consilio. Mostly in something as arduous as this, which is to want to lay a foundation, without a foundation of writing, in such a strange language and so abundant and intricate in its way. If the holy apostle divinely enlightened and full of grace went to the living and divine books, which are his holy companions, how much more should anyone go wherever and take advantage of them, the one that such a work, although small it may seem, wants to found without the said foundation of writing and books that they lacked. Other writers abound, mainly in Latin, where even every day, they do not stop finding, adding and discovering things (Olmos, 1993, p. 9).

In his *Art of the Mexican language,* Olmos performs a reflection, negotiation and accommodation exercise, includes examples of the vast lexicon used to describe objects belonging to the invading culture that are not related to the host culture of the time; instances of the evolutionary process of the lexicon corresponding to different moments in the history of Nahuatl-Castilian contact and lexical variations that respond to different friar's interests and objectives, such as descriptive and religious purposes,

as well as dialect instances of variation. These lexical variations include archaisms, loanwords, neologisms, circumlocutions (to express the non-existence of cultural objects before contacts, such as horses, sheep or other animals), rubbings (based on the agglutinating and polysynthetic typology of Nahuatl and those that resemble incur-poration and composition processes) that reflect sociolinguistic variability (Flores-Farfán, 2013, p. 27).

Likewise, Olmos adapts the indigenous words that refer to religious questions to a meaning of the Christian religion (for example, he uses the phrase *nahuaque tloque* to refer to the omnipresence of the divinity in all things). It implies a process of impo-sition of the hegemonic language (glotophagy) and disappearance or at least adap-tation and profound transformation of the minority language and its uses. According to Flores-Farfán (2013), between methods used by Olmos, lexicographic production stands out, which collects the less marked forms for the production of lexical entries without invalidating the absolutization of the inalienable nouns of Nahuatl. That is, Olmos produces decontextualized forms to deal with questions (linguistic elicitation). The influence of Castilian exercises this operation (for example, in contemporary Nahuatl, forms are produced that combine a possessive prefix with an absolutive suffix: *no-kone-tl*, which means "my son") (pp. 29-30).

The linguistic work of the missionaries was not the work of a moment but a continuous effort of centuries. Hence, having taken the model of Latin grammar at the beginning, little by little, this methodological model of description would change, both due to internal progress and the adaptation of new approaches developed in Europe. In addition to methodological models, the grammatical theory would also change. Consequently, the missionaries develop terms, concepts, and distinctions foreign to the Latin grammatical tradition. In this process, Esparza-Torres (2006) observes the development of "a particular linguistic program, with specific motivations, arguments and statements of a normative nature" and establishes three phases in the configu-ration of that program:

> […] *the first stage of formation, until approximately 1580, in which three actual figures stand out: Olmos (1480–1568), Molina (c. 1514-1585) and Rincón (1556-1601); another stage of full development, which lasts well into the 18th century, characterized by the greater emphasis on purely linguistic and methodological aspects and by the abandonment of the justifying concerns of the program, essential in the previous period; finally, towards the end of the 18th century, another stage opens, in which we appreciate the return of the arguments in favour of the new works that will continue to appear* (pp. 19-20).

Conclusions. Thus, the data collected and studied allow us to sustain that creating the first dictionaries, grammars and other texts in American languages, as well as their exhaustive study, begins in the circumstances of formal linguistic treatment of European vernacular languages, including the Castilian. The birth of the grammars of these languages coincides with the emergence of the arts of Tuscan, Aragonese, French, and non-European languages: Turkish, Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic. Likewise, the complete analysis of Amerindian languages begins almost from the arrival of the Spanish in the New World. Hence, at the end of the

16th century, the grammars of all the available languages of the colony existed, including several Nahuatl grammars.

The study carried out allows us to distinguish the following main features of the process of Amerindian languages grammars' creation in the New Spain of the 16th century that served for the learning of these languages for the sake of evangelization of the native peoples:

1. To construct their works, the creators of grammars followed the doctrinal model of the languages' analysis of Nebrija's *Introductiones latinae* based on traditional scholastic linguistics (since Aristotle), with the firm conviction that Latin enjoyed greater prestige than other languages and that it was more similar to the natural order or what the first languages should have been (according to the formation of the missionaries in the European intellectual framework).

2. Writing their grammars, the evangelizers relied on previous studies and perfected them; usually, they worked as a team.

3. Even though the authors of the grammars began their work from the methods, concepts, terms or categories coined in the Greco-Roman tradition, the metalanguage through which they tried to explain the object language was Castilian (that is, Latin is not the metalanguage, instead its general theory was used, which facilitated the descriptive scaffolding).

4. Due to evangelizing needs, the authors generated the grammatical and lexical forms previously non-existent, creating the missionary variety of Nahuatl (or other American languages) with a collateral effect of imposing the hegemonic language (Castilian) and adaptation and profound transformation of the minority language and its uses (Nahuatl).

5. The missionaries created the lexical variations that responded to new cultural objects and the need to create ecclesiastical terminology (including archaisms, loans, circumlocutions, neosemantisms, neologisms).

6. The scholars used the contrastive method, which consists of the linguistic description being carried out through contrast and the search for the particularity of the target language compared to other languages. It implies, from the comparison carried out at all levels of the language, frequently, the introduction of other languages in the description process and the identification of specific peculiarities, which are accompanied by new terminological coinage. These languages were not metalanguage or object language but served as reference languages (Latin, Castilian, Hebrew, Greek).

Further research. To deepen the analysis of the problems of the first Nahuatl grammars' elaboration, it is necessary to study the historical and social framework in which this activity was developed, to discover the essential aspects of the context of the creation of these works, in particular, to determine the characteristics of the linguistic policies of New Spain and their impact on the production of indigenous language manuals.

References:

Aguirre Beltrán, Gonzalo (1993). *Lenguas vernáculas. Su uso y desuso en la enseñanza: la experiencia de México*, México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.

Breva-Claramonte, Manuel (2008). El marco doctrinal de la tradición lingüística europea y los primeros

misioneros de la Colonia. *Bulletin hispanique*, No. 110-1, 2008, pp. 25-59.

Calvet, Louis-Jean (2005). *Lingüística y Colonialismo*, Buenos Aires: FCE.

Caro Rivera, Juan Gabriel (2010). La domesticación de las lenguas. De las gramáticas europeas a las gramáticas amerindias (de 1492 al siglo XVIII). *Mutatis Mutandis*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2010, Medellín (Colombia), pp. 3-29.

Esparza Torres, Miguel Ángel (2006). Nebrija y los modelos de los misioneros lingüistas del náhuatl. *Missionary Linguistic III / Lingüística Misionera III. Morphology and Syntax,* Publisher: John Benjamins, Editors: Otto Zwartjes, Gregory James, Emilio Ridruejo.

Flores Farfán, José Antonio (2013). La variedad misionera del náhuatl en el Vocabulario en lengua castellana y mexicana y mexicana y castellana de fray Alonso de Molina (1555-1571). *Estudios de cultura náhuatl*, Vol. 45, México ene./jun. 2013.

Foucault, Michel (2002). *Las palabras y las cosas*, Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI.

Guzmán Betancourt, Ignacio (2001). La investigación lingüística en México durante el siglo XVII. *Dimensión Antropológica*, vol. 21, enero-abril, 2001, pp. 33-70.

Hernández de León-Portilla, Ascensión, Miguel de León-Portilla (2014). Edición crítica, estudio introductorio, transliteración y notas. Molina, Fray Alonso de, *Arte de la lengua mexicana y castellana*. Reproducción facsimilar del ejemplar conservado en la Colección Cervantina del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, en: http://www.historicas.unam. mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/arte_lengua/mexicana_castellana.html (10.11.2020).

Kobayashi, José María (1974). *La educación como conquista, Empresa franciscana en México*, 3a ed., México: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos.

Lafaye, Jacques (2005). *Por amor al griego. La nación europea, señorío humanista*, México: FCE.

Molina, fray Alonso de (2014). *Arte de la lengua mexicana y castellana*. Reproducción facsimilar del ejemplar conservado en la Colección Cervantina del Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. Edición crítica, Estudio introductorio, transliteración y notas de Ascensión Hernández de León-Portilla, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Fideicomiso Felipe Teixidor y Monserrat Alfa y de Teixidor, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, en: http://www.historicas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/arte_lengua/mexicana_castellana.html (18.10.2020).

Olmos, Andrés de (1993). *Arte de la Lengua Mexicana*, Concluido en el convento de san Andrés de Ueytlalpan en la provincia de la Totonacapan que es en la Nueva España, el 1º de enero de 1547, Introducción y transliteración por Ascensión y Miguel de León-Portilla, primera edición, Madrid: Ediciones de Cultura Hispánica, Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana.

Polanco Martínez, Fernando (2000). La lengua de la evangelización y de la enseñanza en las crónicas de Motolinía y Reginaldo de Lizárraga. *Espéculo. Revista de estudios literarios*, No. 14, 2000, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Santo Tomás, Domingo de (1995). *Gramática o arte de la lengua general de los indios de los reynos del Perú por el maestro Fray Domingo de Santo Tomás de la orden de Santo Domingo* (R. Cerrón-Palomino, Ed), Cuzco: CBC-Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos "Bartolomé de Las Casas".

Zimmermann, Klaus (2004). La construcción del objeto de la historiografía de la lingüística misionera. *Zwartjes & Hovdhaugen*, eds., pp. 7-32.