

## I dream in another language (2017)

Director: Ernesto Contreras

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### About the movie

Production: Mexico-Netherlands

Director: Ernesto Contreras.

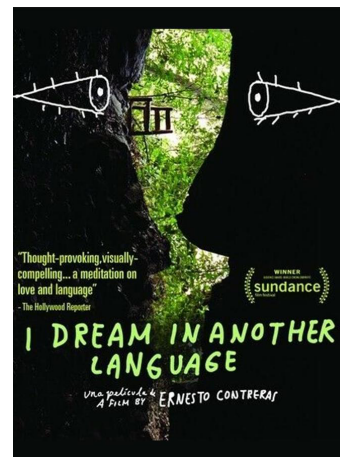
Screenplay: Carlos Contreras.

Camera (color, widescreen): Tonatiuh Martínez.

Editor: Jorge Macaya.

Music: Andrés Sánchez.

Running time: 103 min



With: Fernando Álvarez Rebeil, Eligio Meléndez, Manuel Poncelis, Fátima Molina, Norma Angélica, Mardonio Carballo, Juan Pablo de Santiago, Hoze Meléndez, Nicolasa Ortiz Monasterio, Mónica Miguel.

**Plot:** Martin is a young linguist who decides to do research on the dying language Zikril, in a rural Mexican community. When he arrives, he faces the challenge of bringing together the last two speakers, Isauro and Evaristo (now in their 70s) and convince them to talk to each other again after a quarrel they had 50 years ago.

**To the teacher:** The following handout was originally developed in Spanish for an Intermediate-Advanced Spanish language class. However, I decided to translate it into English as the movie can be used in other classes (Social studies, Linguistics, Anthropology, Ethnic Studies). Besides touching on the issue of language maintenance and loss, this wonderful movie also touches on several other important themes such as community and religious values, social expectations, heteronormativity, and gender roles. It is up to the teacher to decide the format to organize the discussions (in pairs, small groups, debates or whole group discussion).

**General goals of materials:** To raise critical awareness about the loss of indigenous languages *vis à vis* the pressures that new generations of speakers face to assimilate to the dominant culture as well as to become proficient in English to have access to better job opportunities.

### For Foreign Language Classes (Levels)

Intermediate low and up: American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)  
B1, B2, C1, C2: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

**Communicative functions:** description, narration, explanation, argumentation.

**Grammar:** Present, past, present perfect, past perfect, conditionals, future.

## ACTIVITIES

### I. Before you watch the movie answer the following questions. Be prepared to share them with your classmates.

- Do you or your family speak an indigenous language?
- Do you live in a community where an indigenous language is spoken? Which one?
- Do you know speakers of these languages?
- Do a little research to find out which languages are spoken in your community besides yours.
- What do you think are the advantages of speaking an indigenous language?
- Are there any disadvantages?

Watch the movie trailer [here](#) and make three predictions about events that will happen in the movie.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### II. While watching the movie

1. Take notes about the different characters in the film: Who are they? Describe them. What do they do for living? Use the following lines to write your notes

Martín: \_\_\_\_\_

Isauro: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaristo: \_\_\_\_\_

Lluvia: \_\_\_\_\_

Jacinta: \_\_\_\_\_

Flaviana: \_\_\_\_\_

Silverio (radio show host): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Now, use the following table to write about the place of the different languages (Spanish, Zikril, English) in the life of each character.

Character	What they do for a living	Uses Spanish for...	Uses Zikril for...	Uses English for...
Martín				
Isauro				
Evaristo				
Lluvia				
Jacinta				
Flaviana				
Silverio				

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### III. For class discussion.

A. Talk to your classmates about the different stories in the movie:

1. How many can you identify?
2. What connects these stories?

3. What is the role of technology (radio, TV) in the movie and the lives of the people in the community?
4. What is the story that people in the community think happened as the reason for Evaristo and Isauro's quarrel?
5. What is the role of the Catholic religion in the community.

#### B. About the Zikril language and the Zikril peoples

1. Who are the Zikril people?
2. What is the story of the Zikril language?
3. What kind of language is the Zikril?
4. What happens when the Zikril people die?

#### C. About the work of linguists

1. What is Martín doing in San Isidro? Why is he interested in the Zikril language?
2. What is the method he wants to use to get information about the language?
3. What is linguists "Golden rule"?
4. What do you think about Martín's work and attitude towards the Zikril language and the community?
5. Jacinta and Martín had the following Exchange:

Jacinta: What do you know about us, the Zikril people?

Martín: Well, there is not much information about the Zikril culture. We know it started to develop around the year 500...

What do you think about this exchange? Can you identify their different perspectives on the Zikril people, language and culture? What is the difference?

#### D. About the relation between languages and speakers in the movie

1. What is the relation between the Spanish and the Zikril language?
2. What is the role of English?
3. From your perspective, what role do the three languages play in the human relations we see in the movie?
4. What things or circumstances make the characters to get interested or not in the Zikril language?

#### E. Final reflections

1. What did Martín and Lluvia learn about the power of a language such as Zikril?
2. What did *you* learn about indigenous languages loss and maintenance?
3. What do we lose when we lose a language?
4. Did you learn some words in Zikril?
5. Did you learn some words in Spanish?

#### F. About the movie

1. Did you like the movie?
2. Share your favorite scene.
3. Who was your favorite character? Why?

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#### IV. Homework: Reflect and write an essay.

Lluvia is the younger generation in the community. She does not speak Zikril anymore and wants the younger people in the community learn English so they can leave the community, be more a tune with today's world and find work in the United States. Based on this character, write an essay where you reflect about the advantages and disadvantages of being monolingual and bilingual.

- Do you agree with Lluvia's ideas and initiative?
- What would you do in her place?
- Why do you think people prefer, in general, to be bilingual in an European language (Spanish, English, Italian, French, German, etc.) instead of being bilingual in an indigenous or minority languages?
- When and for whom being bilingual is an advantage?
- Can bilingualism be a disadvantage?
- According to the movie, what factors contribute to indigenous languages loss?
- And what factors contribute to indigenous languages maintenance?

Use the following table to organize your ideas.

	Being monolingual	Being bilingual in majority and minority languages
Advantages		
Disadvantages		

Compare and discuss your answers with those of your classmates.

### Did you know?

The Zikril language does not exist. If you read Spanish, you can learn about the linguist who invented it here: [https://www.vice.com/es\\_latam/article/zmgpz5/este-tipo-invento-una-lengua-indigena](https://www.vice.com/es_latam/article/zmgpz5/este-tipo-invento-una-lengua-indigena)

And the director Contreras speaks here about dying indigenous languages in Mexico: [https://www.conapred.org.mx/movil\\_smartphone/index.php?contenido=noticias&id=6011&id\\_opcion=267&op=271](https://www.conapred.org.mx/movil_smartphone/index.php?contenido=noticias&id=6011&id_opcion=267&op=271)

**Explore** the project *68 voices, 68 hearts* by Gabriela Badillo. **Listen** to the Nahuatl poem “When a tongue dies” by Miguel León Portilla. You can also read the English translation on the same site.

