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(Editor)

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Language Diversity Endangered

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Preface

The present volume aims to familiarize interested readers with the extent and variation of the accelerating phenomena of language endangerment. They will find global overviews on endangered languages in chapters dealing with all major geographic regions of the world. These contributions provide insights into the specific areal dynamics of language endangerment, past and present. In addition, the authors discuss numerous key issues concerning the documentation of endangered languages. This book is aimed not only at scholars and students from the various sub-disciplines of linguistics, but also addresses issues that are relevant to educators, language planners, policy makers, language activists, historians and other researchers in human science.

The volume comprises updated versions of presentations from the Colloquium *Language Endangerment, Research and Documentation – Setting Priorities for the 21st Century* held in Bad Godesberg from February 12th–17th, 2000 and sponsored by the *Volkswagen Foundation*. Besides the present publication, the colloquium had a substantial impact on the genesis of the UNESCO report *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, as well as the *Recommendations for Action Plans*. Between 2001 and 2003, a UNESCO ad-hoc expert group on endangered languages (co-chaired by Akira Yamamoto and Matthias Brenzinger) collaborated with the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Section in Paris to draft a preliminary version.

I wish to thank the *Volkswagen Foundation* for their financial support in organizing the colloquium. Thanks also to Monika Feinen, cartographer at the Institut für Afrikanistik, University of Cologne, for her professional contribution. I would like to thank Anke Beck (Mouton de Gruyter) for her sustained support in this enduring publishing project. Thanks are also due, of course, to the authors of the volume and to all colleagues who contributed by sharing their experience in the study of endangered languages. I am particularly grateful to the *Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa* at the *Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Tokyo* for enabling me to finish the book manuscript during my stay there as a visiting professor in 2005–06.

Tokyo, April 2006 Matthias Brenzinger

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Language Endangerment Throughout the World

Matthias Brenzinger

1. Introduction

Questions concerning the origin of human language have recently regained significant scholarly attention and it is expected that ongoing studies may produce important new insights into basic issues of language evolution. One of the most fundamental questions in this context is: Was there ever a Homo sapiens proto-language which existed some 100,000 or 200,000 years ago and then gave rise to large number of very distinct languages about 12,000 years ago, which for their part have been reduced to the approximately 6,000 of today? No matter what possible scenario for language genesis may be conjectured, it seems most likely that the large number of languages spoken on earth in some distant past dramatically dropped when hunter-gatherers changed to a pastoral lifestyle and even more so, when humans become sedentary farmers. The few thousand languages currently spoken are remaining relics of a once much richer pool of languages, and the shrinking of language diversity has accelerated during the last few thousand years.

The currently disappearing and endangered languages of the world, featured in the present volume, are essential sources for studying not only diachronic and synchronic aspects of human language. They are of eminent importance in attaining knowledge on human prehistory in general. Languages are formed by and reflect the most basic human experiences. Without proper scientific documentation, the decline of these languages will result in the irrecoverable loss of unique knowledge that is based on specific cultural and historical experience. Furthermore, the speech communities themselves will often suffer from the loss of their heritage language as a crucial setback of ethnic and cultural identity.

2. Indicators for assessing language vitality

The evaluation of the state of vitality of any language is a challenging task, as one has to consider different, intertwining factors. Speech communities are complex and patterns of language use within these commu-

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Chapter 4
Endangered Languages of Mexico and Central America

Colette Grinevald

1. Introduction

The region to be talked about in this paper is hard to label, although it is clearly identifiable as lying between the United States to the north and Colombia to the south, and comprising the following eight countries: Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. This area between North and South America partly overlaps with them both culturally and linguistically. It is subdivided into different specific political, economic and cultural subgroupings that have variously been labelled Middle America, Mesoamerica, Central America, or the Intermediate Area. This presentation will follow a straightforward country by country order, from Mexico in the north to Panama in the south, and underline the startling contrasts that characterize these countries in terms of the density of indigenous populations, the vitality of their languages and the development of programs for the linguistic training of native speakers.

It is a region where major centers of civilization flourished during the 2,500 years before the Spanish Conquest, like those of the of Teotihuacan, of the Toltec and the Aztec in Central Mexico, the Olmec on the Gulf Coast of Mexico, the Monte Alban of Oaxaca, and the Classic Maya of Chiapas in Mexico and the Peten in Guatemala (Longacre 1967).

One of the major characteristics of this area as a whole is that it was the most densely populated area of the continent before the arrival of the European conquerors and colonizers. It is estimated that the indigenous population of the region reached 25 million in 1519. The city of Tenotchtitlan, for instance, had 500,000 people, at a time when Rome had only 100,000 and Paris, the largest city of Europe had only 300,000 (Garza Cuarón and Lastra 1991:107). It is also one of the regions of the world that has suffered one of the greatest sudden losses of indigenous population: less than a century after the initial European contacts, the population had been reduced to one million people. This happened as the result of numerous converging

dynamics, such as the physical elimination of ethnic populations, ethnic suicide by the populations themselves (through a combination of low birth rates and high rates of infanticide and adult suicide, of the kind witnessed today with some indigenous groups of the Amazonian region of South America), loss of population from incapacity at adapting to the inhospitable lands to which the indigenous populations were relegated, and deadly impact of diseases brought in from the Old World.

Today the proportion of indigenous population and of speakers of indigenous languages in this region is much higher than that of its neighbors to the north (the United States and Canada) and is only equalled by that of the Andean countries to the south. This region is home to some of the largest Amerindian language communities, with several languages having over a million speakers, such as *Nahuatl* (*Aztec*) and *Yucatec* in Mexico and the *Quichean* complex (*Kiche'-Tzutujil-Kaq'chikel*) in Guatemala, and more than two dozen languages with more than a 100,000 speakers. But, as is the case throughout the Americas, all of the indigenous languages of the region, large languages included, are to be considered endangered.[1]

2. Mexico[2]

The major actors at Mexican institutions involved in the study of the languages of Mexico all point to the fact that ALL Mexican languages are endangered if one includes the threat of potentially swift language shift in some major *Nahuatl* speaking communities (see Hill and Hill 1986; for instance). The same Mexican actors are also generally concerned that speakers of the languages to be documented and studied be trained to do linguistics whenever feasible, through the programs that will be mentioned below.

2.1. Overview of the languages of Mexico

The wealth of Mexico in terms of its number of indigenous languages and its diversity of language families is well known. Actual accounts give about 58 to 200 languages, depending on which criteria are used to determine languages. It is estimated that about 113 languages have disappeared in Mexico since the 12th century: this figure includes 48 languages that have remained unclassified and 65 classified languages, 33 of which were Uto-Aztecan and many of those on the Mexican-US border (Garza Cuarón and Lastra 1991: 97).

As expounded on numerous occasions by Kaufman, there is a great need to keep in mind the state of relatedness of the languages in all discussions of the genetic classification of the languages of this region of the world and of the simple count of languages spoken in the country. Kaufman distinguishes between dialects, language complexes, language groups (or branches or families if there is no superordinate category), language families and stocks or phyla. In this perspective for instance, Kaufman signals that the names *Nahua, Otomí, Zapoteco, Mixteco, Mazateco, Chinanteco, Tlapaneco, Popoloca, Pame, Zoque* actually refer to language groups, and not to individual languages, as each one contains two or more languages. The range of variation found in calculations of the number of languages of Mexico comes from linguists with different purposes, such as linguists focusing on the classification of languages like Kaufman, or linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), who focus primarily on estimating the desirability of Bible translation. One can, for instance, contrast Kaufman's division of *Zapoteco* into 10 languages with the list of 57 *Zapoteco* entries given in the SIL Ethnologue.

Another characteristic of Mexico is its very large population of speakers of indigenous languages. According to the 2000 census, there are 1,448,936 speakers of *Náhuatl*, 452,887 of *Zapoteco*, and 444,498 of *Mixteca*.[3] Five of the *Mayan* languages total more than 1,5 million speakers.[4]

2.2. The endangered languages of Mexico[5]

Garza Cuarón and Lastra (1991) is one of the most reliable sources of information for the country: it combines the necessary wariness of figures from the official 1990 census and information from many field accounts.[6]

Table 1. The most endangered languages of Mexico (Garza Cuarón and Lastra 1991: 97)

Stock	*Language*	*Speakers*
Uto-Aztecan	Pima-Papago	236
	Varohio	300
Otomanguean	Ocuiltec (Tlahuica)	93
	Ixcatec	119
	Northern Pame	30
Mixe-Zoqueta	Oluta Popoluca	121
Mayan	Lacandon	200
	Acatec	100

Table 1. (cont.)

Stock	*Language*	*Speakers*
Yuman-Seri	Paipai	24
	Kiliwa	90
	Cochimi	220
	Cucapa	178
	Seri	500
Algonquian	Kickapoo	400

The following languages must be considered to be the most endangered because of their few speakers: *Oluta*: 14 (Zavala 2000), *South Zoque* of Tuxla: 0–5 and *Ayapa mixe zoque* 2–10 (Roberto Zavala, p. c.). To those can be added some *Mayan* languages spoken on the border with Guatemala, some spoken by immigrants from that country. The figures from the 2000 census are 90 for *Ixil*, 23 for *Aguacateco*, and a few each for *Mocho, Teco* and *Tuzanteko*.

In general, one must keep in mind several obstacles to the task of evaluating which languages need most attention such as great variation in the counting of languages, in the counting of speakers left, as well as in the assessment of which languages of Mexico are the most un(der)-documented.[7] What is certain is that the last ten years have seen a surge of interest in the indigenous languages and in fieldwork projects, as described in the next section.

2.3. Present day work on the languages of Mexico

This section will focus on various national programs attending to the study and documentation of the languages of Mexico, including the training of Mexican linguists, and for a few of particular interest here, the training of indigenous native speakers. A number of programs focusing on the study of indigenous languages have existed for a while in Mexico, but this last decade has seen a noticeable surge in linguistic studies that take advantage of the latest developments in the discipline. There is an increasingly active network of national and foreign linguists, national and foreign institutions, international conferences and workshops.

Linguistic training in Mexico City

- The *Escuela Nacional de Antropologia e Historia* (ENAH) is the oldest institution. It had been offering B.A. and M.A. (licenciatura y maestria) degrees and has just started offering a doctoral degree as well. The degree is in general linguistics, but there is training available for the study of Middle American Languages.
- The *Seminario de Lenguas Indígenas* is a research institute of the University of Mexico (UNAM).
- The *Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas* is another research institute of the University of Mexico (UNAM). It has a Ph.D. program in Anthropology and students can obtain training in linguistics by tutoring.
- The *Colegio de México* (COLMEX) has research programs and training of Ph.D. students.
- The *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana* has a B.A., an M.A. and a Ph.D. in general linguistics
- The *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico* (UNAM) has also B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. in general linguistics with specialization in *Spanish*.

Other Mexican university and research centers focusing on Indian languages

- The *Universidad de Sonora* offers a B.A. and an M.A. in linguistics and specializes in the study of the Indian languages of this northern part of Mexico. They have been running well attended international conference in recent years and have produced collections of proceedings of these conferences (Encuentros de Hermosillo).
- The *Universidad de Guadalajara* through its Departamento de Lenguas Indígenas specializes in the languages of the northwest of Mexico. It has an MA in general linguistics.
- The *Universidad de Yucatán* in Mérida offers a B.A. in linguistics with a specialization in *Yucateco*.
- The *Centro de Investigación y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* (CIESAS) is a research institute and a training center delivering an M.A. degree in linguistics for native speakers in Amerindian languages. Beyond Mexico City it has several branches in different parts of the country. CIESAS-Sureste, based in San Cristobal de Las Casas, is actively attending to the languages of Chiapas and Southern of Mexico.

Program for the documentation of Mexican languages

- The *Proyecto para la Documentación de las lenguas de Meso America* (PDLMA), co-directed by Kaufman (University of Pittsburgh), Justeson (University of Albany) and Zavala (CIESAS-Sureste), is a major project for the documentation of Mexican languages. In the last decade it has been attending to a large number of Mexican languages, including all *MixeZoquean*, some *Zapotecan*, some *Totonacan*, some *Nahua*, one *Popoloca*, three *Mayan*, and both *Matlatzincan* languages.[8] The functioning of this program is described in Kaufman (2001).

A new government institute for the languages of Mexico

- The *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas de México* (INALI) was created in 2003 as a part of the General Law of Linguistic Rights for the Indigenous populations. It is dedicated to basic and applied research on the languages of Mexico, the standardization of writing systems and the production of teaching and education materials, elaborating maps and catalogs of languages. It is also meant also to organize campaigns for the diffusion of indigenous languages, to organize conferences on the languages, to train and grant certification of translators. In addition it should promote language policies aimed at a greater use and development of indigenous languages. Much hope has been placed in this new institute and it is hoped that it will not be too bureaucratic and will fulfill some of the hopes it raises.[9]

2.4. Perspectives on Mexico

Mexico is the largest country of the region considered here and the one with the greatest number of languages and diversity of languages. A significant amount of work has already been done on the languages but much remains to be done. No family of languages in Mexico has been as well studied as the *Mayan* languages spoken in Guatemala, for which the level of linguistic knowledge is probably unparalleled in America. And a number of languages are indeed in need of urgent documentation as their speaker figures are alarming, although the general state of endangerment of all the Indian languages, including the major ones like *Nahuatl*, is always to be kept in mind. Comprehensive documentation relying on modern linguistic analyses is still needed for a very large number of languages, making Mexico a major center of linguistic activities in the future. If one region was to be pointed at for an urgent need of attention to its languages, it would be the region of Baja California.

Most notable is the fact that the last 10 years have seen major developments aimed at advancing and coordinating linguistic studies in the languages of Mexico with which any outside linguist interested in Mexico would do well to become familiar. Regional centers such as the ones in Hermosillo in the North and San Cristobal de las Casas in the south are becoming active centers of linguistic studies relying on field studies of the local languages. A major part of their actitivies, at least in CIESAS-Sureste, is the training of native speakers. The success of such training is key if the new INALI institute is to be able to carry out its planned programs for the promotion of indigenous languages.

3. Guatemala[10]

As was the case with Mexico, the outline of the present state of language endangerment to be given will be followed by important information on the intense linguistic activities being carried out on the languages, in particular on how the study and development of *Mayan* languages is being more and more carried out by native *Mayan* speakers, as discussed in Grinevald 2002.[11]

The striking feature of *Mayan* languages is their omnipresence in the country. Mayas form absolute majorities in almost all of the communities where they presently live in Guatemala. The great majority of Mayas speak one of the twenty nine extant *Mayan* languages, almost always as a first language, and many Mayans are still monolingual in a *Mayan* language, especially among the older population. In spite of these demographic signs of vitality, however, language shift and loss among Mayas is growing at an alarming rate, and Mayan community leaders are increasingly concerned about the future viability of their languages and community structures.[12]

3.1. Guatemalan endangered languages

Most *Mayan* languages are potentially threatened but are not actually disappearing. The signs of potential threat are large populations of bilinguals, the beginning of *Spanish* monolingualism among children, particularly in urban areas, and the transfer (for some time now) of functions

that were once filled in *Mayan* to *Spanish*, particularly literacy and public speech. The level of vitality of the different languages varies remarquably, as does the level of vitality of a particular variant.

3.1.1. Fast language shift

All *Mayan* languages show signs of active shift, including the largest one, *K'ichee'*, which has close to a million speakers. Speaker populations that range from around 20,000 to well over 100,000 – *Akatek, Chuj, Poqomchi', Ch'orti', Ixil, Tz'utujil* and *Q'anjob'al* – seem to be viable for the moment but shift could set in very fast. Such a fast shift has been detected with *Jakaltek* (*Popti'*), which today is considered one of the most endangered languages in Guatemala, although here, too, the community seems conscious of the danger and is preoccupied with finding ways of stemming the loss.

Although neither *Kaqchikel* (one of the majority languages with almost half a million speakers) nor *Q'anjob'al* (a minority language with less than 100,000 speakers) is severely threatened today, *Kaqchikel* is obviously more so than *Q'anjob'al*, but this could change in a generation. The striking difference is that in many (most?) Kaqchikel towns, it is increasingly common to hear *Spanish* in public areas (like the street), but in *Q'anjob'al* towns one still almost never hears *Spanish* (except, of course, Barillas, where the urban population is heavily Ladino).

3.1.2. Seriously endangered languages

Languages may be in this category for one of two reasons: either the number of speakers is very low or dropping fast or there is now only one community of speakers. *Mopan* is gravely endangered, as it is now spoken by relatively few people in Guatemala (and in Belize). *Poqomam*, although not as small or as immediately endangered, needs listing here too because it has been steadily losing speakers. Meanwhile *Uspantek, Sikapakense, Sakapultek,* and *Awakatek* are cases of languages that are endangered by the fact that they are all spoken in only one municipality.

3.1.3. Moribund languages

Itzaj has about 30 fluent speakers today, none of them children, which places it in the moribund category. This is a situation where the community has expressed interest in reviving the almost lost language and has enrolled the help of the linguist specialist of the language (Hofling 1992, England p. c.). It remains now to be seen how many of the sixty or so semi-

speakers, some of whom are still relatively young, might become fluent speakers. *Teko* in Guatemala may have younger speakers, including children, but it should still probably be classified as moribund. There also seem to be six speakers of *Xinka* (a non-Mayan language) left of the three *Xinka* languages that were still spoken in the 70's.

3.1.4. Revival possible?

In the particular context of Guatemala, where the strength of Maya identity has been on a sharp rise in the last two decades, buttressed by intense language planning and active promotion of *Mayan* languages by new Mayan institutions, England (p. c.) reports that some languages seem to be undergoing revival. While older children are *Spanish* dominant, younger children are becoming *Maya* dominant, because of a conscious effort on the part of parents to reverse the shift. For example with *Poqomam* of Palin, the imminent demise of which was predicted some 15 years ago by Guillermina Herrera and which today has more children speaking it than there were then. Something similar may be happening with *Ch'orti'*, where revival is found in some families. There is no telling how widespread this phenomenon might be today.

3.2. Institutions dealing with the preservation of Mayan languages

Academic and institutional attention to the *Mayan* languages of Guatemala has few parallels in other American countries today. The presentation of the institutions to be considered here follows a double line of logic: on the one hand it respects a chronological order and on the other it highlights the long term contributions of the two foreign linguists mentioned, Terrence Kaufman and Nora England, for the expected academic readership of this paper. This conscious bias towards highlighting the doings of foreign academics is meant to give an account of an interesting and unfortunately rare example of the constructive impact of outsiders on the development of national and local programs that create, promote and strengthen basic and applied linguistic research programs for native speakers.

- The *Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquin* (PLFM) was founded by Terrence Kaufman in 1970 with the purpose of advancing knowledge on the *Mayan* languages of the country. The operation consisted of matching doctoral students from universities in the United States

with teams of *Mayan* speakers in a mutual teaching program. 14 languages and 26 dialects received attention. About 80 *Mayan* speakers were taught the basics of descriptive linguistics and dictionary making procedures between 1972 and 1977, and about 40 more were taught descriptive linguistics and *Mayan* grammar in 1988 and 1989.[13]

- The *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (ALMG) was approved as an autonomous state institution in 1991. In 1987, it had established a "unified" alphabet for *Mayan* languages. Several of its cofounders were previously members of the PLFM. Today it has branches for all *Mayan* languages of Guatemala, and it promotes their use and study through activities such as radio programs or translations of grammars originally written in *English* (England 1998).
- *Oxlajuuj Keej Maya' Ajtz'iib'* (OKMA) was founded in 1990 by Nora England, one of the original linguists of the PLFM, with *Mayan* speakers of *K'ichee', Achi, Kaqchikel, Q'anjob'al* and *Poqomam*. The goals of OKMA are to pursue the intensive study of *Mayan* linguistics, to attend to the production of grammatical and scholarly materials about *Mayan* languages and, to that end, to further train teams of native *Mayan* linguists. Recently it has become involved in documentation and archiving projects for severely endangered languages of Guatemala. This institution is unique in its being totally in the hands of native speakers and in producing high quality linguistic work recognized on the international academic scene. See a review of its work in Barret (2005). An OKMA member is finishing a doctoral program at Austin Texas, and an OKMA team has secured funding from the Hans Rausing Endangered Language Documentation Program (HRELDP) in London.

Guatemalan universities and other programs dealing with Mayan Languages

- The *Universidad Rafael Landivar* (URL), in Guatemala City, offers bachelor's degrees in linguistics with a specialization in *Mayan* linguistics, and professional degrees in bilingual education and in legal interpreting.[14] A program called Edumaya has supported hundreds of *Mayan* students with full scholarships from US-AID.
- The *Universidad Mariano Galvez* (UMG) has applied linguistics and sociolinguistics programs, in which the great majority of the students are Mayas.
- Many other institutions for education and for writers' groups deal with *Mayan* languages and concentrate on linguistic training for *Mayan* speakers. Many of the major writers for the National Program in Bilingual Education (PRO-NEBI, now DIGEBI) established in 1985 have been graduates of the PLFM and the University programs mentioned above.

3.3. An exemplary situation in Latin America

Guatemala has been an intense language planning laboratory that has attracted much attention in the past two decades. The 1996 Peace Accords have responded substantially to demands of the "Mayan Movement" for the recognition and development of the *Mayan* languages of the country (see Grinevald 2002).

The documentation of *Mayan* languages in Guatemala today is largely in the hands of native linguists. The linguists of OKMA are, for instance, presently documenting *Teko, Sakapulteko* and *Uspanteko* with support from the Hans Rausing Programme. The *Mayan* languages Kaufman still considered underdocumented are two variants of *Q'eqchi'* (*Cahabón* and *Lanquín*) and one variant of *K'iché* (*Cunén*). *Ch'orti* in the east of the country also remains in need of attention. The non-Mayan *Xinka* language is now being attended to as part of a three language documentation project supported by the new Documentation of Endangered Languages program (DEL) of the USA.[15]

4. Belize

The languages of this small country are an *English-based Creole* which serves as lingua franca, and several indigenous languages that are also spoken in neighboring countries. The figures on Belizean languages given below were all taken from *Ethnologue* (Gordon 2005).

Belize Creole English is the first or second language of the vast majority of the population of about 190,000. This creole is historically an extension of *Miskitu Coast Creole*, which is also spoken in Honduras and Nicaragua. The attitude of its speakers towards it is positive.

The *Garifuna* language of the Carib-Arawakan family is spoken by a population of 12,000 and is also spoken in Honduras. The Garifunas, who speak creole as a second language, are concerned with the loss of their ethnic language and interested in language revitalization.

Three *Mayan* languages are spoken by small communities: *Yucatec, Mopan* and *Kekchi*. The *Yucatec Maya* in Belize account for only 5,800 of the

700,000 total Yucatec population of the Yucatan peninsula. The Belizean Yucatec community is preoccupied with the loss of its language, as all speakers are now older than 40. Some classes in *Yucatec* are being started.

The Belizean community of *Mopan Maya* numbers about 7,000 and is larger than the Guatemalan one of 2,700. No indication of the level of vitality of *Mopan* in Belize is available, though it is known that the language is seriously endangered in Guatemala.

The community of Kekchi' in Belize is only 9,000 strong, while that of Guatemala has a population of 340,000. The *Kekchi* of Belize is a slightly different dialect from the dialects of *Guatemalan Kekchi'*.

5. El Salvador

Very few languages and speakers of indigenous languages have survived in El Salvador which had severe policies of elimination for those languages in the early part of the 20th century. Three ethnic groups of sizable numbers are still identified but the three languages – *K'ekchi (or Q'eqchi), Lenca* and *Pipil* – are all nearly extinct.

The K'ekchi people are Mayan and are in a smaller number in El Salvador than in Belize, with only 12,000.

The *Lenca* language has remained unclassified, although it is considered by some to be *Macro-Chibchan*. The Lenca number 36,000 as an ethnic group in El Salvador, but the language is nearly extinct there, as it is in Honduras. The varieties of *Lenca* in El Salvador and Honduras are considered to be different dialects.

The third and largest ethnic group of El Salvador is the *Pipil*, with 200,000. Their language belongs to the *Nahuat* family and is the best known language of the country. This language once thought extinct, has been described in Campbell (1985), who unexpectedly found about twenty speakers thirty years ago, in the course of a survey of dying languages of Central America. Today, *Pipil* is the object of coordinated language revitalization efforts.[16]

6. Honduras[17]

6.1. The languages of Honduras

There are six indigenous languages spoken in Honduras, three of which have speaker populations in neighboring countries and are considered to have a reasonable level of vitality (within the confines of the general situation of endangerment of all the indigenous languages in the region already mentioned), and two other languages endogenous to Honduras and considered to be severely endangered. Two ethnic communities are said to have no speakers left. The Lenca people are about 50,000. They are thought to be the original occupants of Honduras and to have constituted its base population. Their language is unclassified, and is considered extinct, although there might be a few speakers left. The variant of Honduras is said to be a different dialect from the one of El Salvador.[18]

6.1.1. Less endangered languages of Honduras

The *Garifuna* language, already mentioned in the profiles of Belize and Guatemala, has about 22,000 speakers. It is spoken by a black population that is bilingual in *Garifuna* and either *Miskitu Coast Creole* or *Spanish*. The *Garifuna* language remains understudied and there is a clear need for some projects that would involve the interested communities of the region.[19] The other substantial speaker population is that of the *Miskitu*, which has about 23,000 speakers in Honduras, and many more in neighboring Nicaragua. There is also a community of *Tawahka* (*Sumu*) speakers of several hundreds, with also more speakers on the Nicaraguan side of the border.

6.1.2. Most endangered languages of Honduras

The *Paya* or *Pech* language belongs to the *Chibchan* family of languages and is spoken on the North Central Coast of Honduras by 869 out of a population of 2,000–2,500 people (Ramon Rivas 1993). The Paya community has expressed interest in preserving its language and some work has been carried out to that end.[20]

Tol (or *Tolupan*) is also called *Jicaque*. It is a language isolate that had two dialects, the western branch of which is extinct and the eastern one of which is spoken by around 1,000 (between speakers and semi-speakers) out of a population of 20,000. The speaker community best known is that of the Montaña de la Flor of the Francisco Morazan Department in North Central Honduras. The group is said to be hardly accessible and the field conditions very difficult. There remain 300 to 350 speakers out of a population of 600, including some children, all bilingual in *Spanish*.

6.2. Language planning in Honduras

The indigenous population of Honduras is rather small and the majority are actually mestizados indigenous peasant (indigenous people acculturated to the *mestizo-Spanish* speaking culture), but they have organized and have presented clear demands for the defense of land titles and for the defense of their indigenous languages. There are representatives of the indigenous population in the Ministry of Education for instance, although they are not always speakers of an indigenous language.

Towards the late 90's, some language planning took place, and the Bilingual Education program brought in linguists specialists of some of the local indigenous languages (Holt for *Paya*, Hale for *Miskitu* and *Sumu*, and Salamanca for *Miskitu*). But the programs encountered a number of difficulties, including the resistance of the financing institution, the World Bank, to invest in endangered languages (considered economically not viable), and a serious problem of manpower, not uncommon in development projects. It would seem that after several years of lethargy activity is beginning again.

7. Nicaragua

The fate of the indigenous languages of Nicaragua has been very different on the Pacific and the Atlantic sides of the country. No language has survived on the Pacific side, as in the interior: *Monimbo* (unclassified), *Matagalpa* (*Misumalpan*) and *Subtiava* have been extinct for some time. Meanwhile, several indigenous languages are still spoken in the eastern half of the country, now known as the Caribbean Coast (and previously the Atlantic Coast), where the lingua franca is in fact an *English-based creole* called *Miskitu Coast Creole* (or now *Kriol*). Creole and indigenous languages started receiving special attention twenty years ago as part of the process of establishing autonomy for the region during the Sandinista's government. The Autonomy Statute of the Nicaraguan Constitution of 1987 officially recognized all the languages of the region, and the point was specifically made that every language deserved recognition and protection, no matter how small its population and speaker base.

7.1. The indigenous languages of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua

Three languages are still spoken on the Caribbean Coast with varying degrees of vitality, with a fourth ethnic group claiming interest in language revitalization effort, in spite of having no speakers left.

Miskitu is the largest indigenous language of the region. It belongs to the *Misumalpan* family, the name of which is a blend of the languages of that family: MI for *Miskitu*, SUM for *Sumu*, ALPA for the extinct *Matagalpa*. The figures of the ethnic group are uncertain, but range between 75,000 and 120,000. To a great extent, the *Miskitu* language serves as a marker of identity for people of mixed background, many of whom were not declaring themselves Miskitu before the Sandinista Revolution, preferring to be identified as Creoles (i. e., of black descent). The language is also the second language of many Sumu people. It is secure in most Miskitu communities, where there is a high proportion of speakers and the language is taught to the children. The *Miskitu* language is set apart from most of the indigenous languages of this part of the world because of its status as a written language, as missionaries of the Moravian church developed materials for it in the mid-nineteen century and used it as a lingua franca in the region. The language is relatively well documented and a high proportion of its speakers are literate in it. It consists of several mutually-intelligible dialects.

Up until the Sandinista Revolution of the 1980's, one talked of the *Sumu* language as another Misumalpan language with three distinct dialects and with an ethnic population of about 6,000. And as the Sumus were dominated by the Miskitus, in whose language they were bilingual, many did not identify themselves as Sumus, and even less as *Sumu* speakers. Both *Sumu* and *Miskitu* are also spoken in Honduras to the north.

Rama is the only Nicaraguan language to be spoken only in Nicaragua. It belongs to the large *Chibchan* family of languages that ranges from Honduras to Costa Rica, Panama and the northern part of Colombia. *Rama* is the smallest of the indigenous languages of Nicaragua and is in fact a moribund language with no more than a few dozen speakers, the majority of whom are isolated jungle dwellers. A major language documentation project and language and cultural revitalization, to which the community is still committed, took place in the 1990's during Sandinista times.

There is an immigrant Garifuna community in Nicaragua but none speak the language, although the Garifunas participated in the discussion of the Autonomy project and claimed interest in language and culture revitalization efforts.

7.2. Linguistic rights and language development in Nicaragua

Today, programs of bilingual and multicutural education have been established for all the ethnic communities of the Atlantic Coast and operate

with more or less success, given the limited support they have received in post-Sandinista times.

7.2.1. A team of professional linguists

A team of linguists self-identified as "*Linguists for Nicaragua*" has been working for over twenty years now on the various languages of Nicaragua for which communities have requested support. The work was carried out through the Center for Research and Documentation of the Atlantic Coast (CIDCA), now affiliated with the University of Central America (UCA-Managua).[21] The languages, linguists and work involved have included: for *Miskitu*, Danilo Salamanca, who worked on a grammar and a dictionary and who is promoting literary production; for "*Sumu*" Ken Hale, who demonstrated that *Mayangna* (or *Northern Sumu*, worked on by Susan Norwood first and now Helena Benedicto), and *Ulwa* (or Southern Sumu, worked on by Hale and later by Tom Green and Andrew Koontz-Garboden) were different languages. Those languages needed basic linguistic descriptions and the projects emphasized the development of literacy and the training of community linguists.[22]

On the other hand, the "*Rama* Language Project" was a combination of salvage linguistics and language revitalization of a moribund and profoundly devalued language. A team of linguists (Grinevald Craig, Tibbitts, Assadi), helped by volunteer students from the University of Oregon, worked through CIDCA with the Rama community for several years (Craig 1992, Grinevald 2003). Today, a second phase of the project concentrates on archiving documentation materials and supporting the language revitalization program, including support for the land claims of Ramas whose territory is being invaded.[23]

7.2.2. Institutions dealing with language revitalization

The *University of the Autonomous Regions of Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua* (URACCAN), a recently opened regional university, is committed to the development of programs for the maintenance and revitalization of the languages and cultures of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua through an Institute for researching and promoting the languages and cultures of the coast region (IPILC), while WANI, the magazine of CIDCA-UCA continues to be the main source of information for the Caribbean Coast.

Although the country still sorely lacks resources, personnel and know how for this line of work, IPILC at URACCAN nevertheless constitutes the type of local institution through which such work should be channeled. It is clear that by now all the indigenous populations of the region are mobilized to defend their linguistic rights and look to it for support and training.

8. Costa Rica[24]

8.1. Languages of Costa Rica

Among the native languages of Costa Rica, four are still vital (again within the limits of the general endangerment and precariousness of all the languages of the region), two are considered moribund, and two are definitely extinct. All the languages still spoken today belong to the same *Chibchan* family of languages.

Table 2. Languages of Costa Rica (Rojas Chaves 1997)

Language	*Population*	*Speakers*	*Status*
Bribri	12,172	75 % speakers	vital
Cabecar	9,308	95 % speakers	vital
Guaymi (or Moveres)	5,360	95 % speakers	vital
Guatuso (or Malecus)	1,074	70 % speakers	vital
Boruca (or Bruncas)	5,012	10 speakers (Rojas FW)	*moribund* and 30 semi-speakers
Terraba (Terribe in Panama)	1,253	1 or 2 speakers, 5 semi-speakers (Constenla p. c.)	*moribund* in Costa Rica
Huetar	816	none	extinct end of 18th century
Chorotega	795	none	extinct end of 18th century (lasted in Nicaragua into 19th century)

8.2. Institutions dealing with Costa Rican languages

By Executive Decree a "Subsystem of Indigenous Education for the Preservation and Revitalization of Indigenous Languages" was created in 1993. The reform of the Constitution in 1999 included an article stating that "the State will watch over the maintenance and development of the national indigenous languages".

The study of the languages of Costa Rica is linked to the name of Adolfo Constenla Umaña, of the University of Costa Rica, founder and coordinator (1985–1996) of a Program for Linguistic Research on the Languages of Costa Rica and Neighbouring Areas (PIL) and editor of the linguistic journal Estudios de Lingüística Chibcha.

9. Panama

9.1. Languages of Panama

All the languages of Panama demonstrate a greater vitality than the languages of neighbouring countries. The major danger to these languages is that of language shift induced by a growing urbanization of some of the populations.

Table 3. Languages of Panama (Ethnologue)

Family	*Language*	*Population*	*Other contries*
Chibchan			
	Guaymi	128,000	(also in Costa Rica)
	Kuna	50-70,000	
	Teribe	3,000	(also in Costa Rica as Terraba)
	Buglere	2,500	
Chaco			
	Emberá	7-8,000	(also in Colombia)
	Waumeo	3,000	(also in Colombia)

9.2. Documentation of Kuna by Kunas at AILLA

Panama is the site of an interesting case of extensive documentation being produced directly by speakers of the population concerned. After decades of research on the oral traditions of the Kunas by anthropological linguist Joel Sherzer, a situation has developed whereby *Kuna* speakers themselves are now actively documenting their traditions and archiving their recordings at the Archives of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) in Austin Texas (founded by Sherzer himself). This is an interesting example of the contribution of new technologies and academic work being made available to a speaker population that demands it and uses it.

10. Conclusion

This report has emphasized the dynamics of the attention being given to indigenous languages of this central region of the American continents. The situations vary greatly from country to country, from very large and heavily populated countries like Mexico with major programs to very small and newly independent countries like Belize with little infrastructure for the study of its languages. It is a region with very large indigenous languages that have more than a million speakers, a phenomenon unknown in the countries to the north, but at the same time with numerous moribund languages and undocumented languages in need of urgent attention.

Mexico and Guatemala have major indigenous populations and large numbers of languages, some of which may have large speaker populations but are nevertheless endangered because they are at the mercy of powerful and potentially swift shifts to *Spanish*. The main characteristic of those two countries is the institutionalization of the systematic study of the local languages and the recent development of linguistic training programs for native speakers. Particularly striking are the ambitious language planning activities involving the *Mayan* languages of present-day Guatemala, including extensive bilingual education programs and language standardization and development programs.

Of the smaller and less populated countries to the south, one should remember the following aspects of their indigenous languages. Three languages have a large population base and a solid community of speakers. *Miskitu* is spoken across two countries (Honduras and Nicaragua) and benefits from a literate past. *Garifuna* is also spoken across two countries (Belize and Honduras) and may be in more dire need of linguistic attention. The large *Guaymi-Movere* and *Kuna* groups of Panama also constitute vital languages. Four relatively small *Chibchan* groups of Costa Rica nevertheless have a strikingly high proportion of speakers, which contrasts with the much more threathened languages of Honduras and the practically extinct languages of El Salvador. Meanwhile, the Sandinista Revolution, particularly through its project of Autonomy for the Atlantic/Caribbean Coast, attracted much attention to the indigenous languages of Nicaragua, big and small, and in the last decade of the 20th century turned the country into a major linguistic field laboratory that combined linguistic and applied lin-

guistic research with language revitalization community programs. Major linguistic research and development work was also carried out in the emerging *Nicaraguan Sign Language.*

One of the main goals of this presentation was to highlight regional institutions of these countries and to underline the importance of acknowledging their existence. It emphasized in particular the important efforts being developed in several of these countries to provide their citizens with proper linguistic training in order for Amerindian linguistics to develop in situ in a self-sustainable way, the optimum scenario being of course the training of speakers of indigenous languages wherever and whenever possible. If properly thought through, the approach to the study of the indigenous languages of this region of the world ought to have a significant impact on how we conceive the relation of field linguists to the field, to linguistic communities, as well as to local and regional institutions. It means systematically integrating local concerns in the future planning of language-related academic efforts, which include standard linguistic research, newly developing language documentation and language maintenance projects, as well as situations of salvage linguistics for the moribund languages.

Mexico

1 Pima-Panago 236 (speakers)
2 Varohio 300
3 Ocuiltec Tlahuica 93
4 Ixcatec 119
5 Northern Pame 30
6 Olutla Popoluca 121
7 Lacandon 200
8 Akatek 100
9 Paipai 24
10 Kiliwa 90
11 Cochimi 220
12 Cocopa 178
13 Seri 500
14 Kickapo Kikapu 400

Guatemala

15 Mopan few
16 Itza 30
17 Teko ¿?
18 Xinka ¿?

El Salvador

19 Pipil 200.000

Honduras

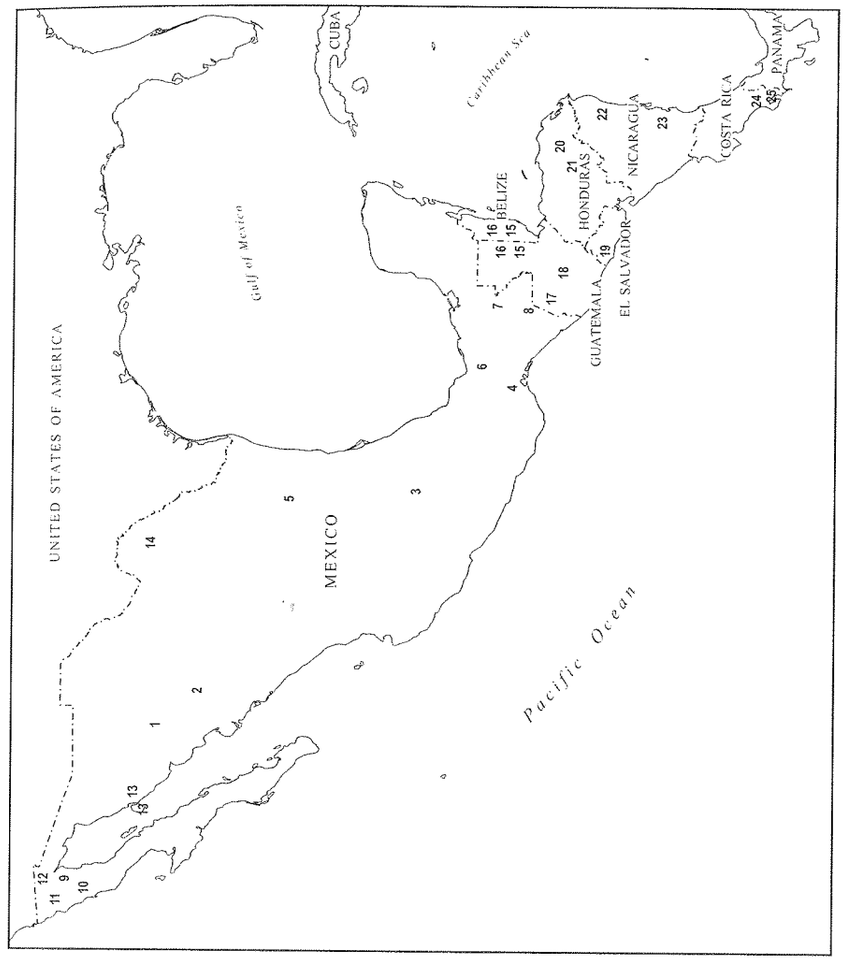
20 Paya Pech 869
21 Tol Jicaque 1.000

Nicaragua

22 Sumu Mayangna, Ulwa¿?
23 Rama 25

Costa Rica

24 Teribe 1 or 2
25 Boruca 10



Map 3. Mexico and Central America

Notes

1. The fact that the community of linguists of these Amerindian languages is acutely aware of this state of affairs accounts for the tone of alarmism and the posture of activism that runs through most of the writings about the state of Amerindian languages today.
2. The material to be presented in this section relies on various publications and on personal communication with Terrence S Kaufman and Roberto Zavala. Reliable and detailed information on the state of endangerment of the languages of Mexico may be found in several publications, such as Bartholomew, Lastra and Manrique 1994, 1995 (henceforth B, L and M 1994, 1995), Campbell 2000, Garza Cuarón and Lastra 1991 (henceforth GC and L), Suarez 1983.
3. Otomí 291,722; Totonaca 240,034; Mazateco 214,477
4. They are Maya Yucateco with 799,696, Tzotzil with 297,561, Tzeltal with 284,826, Chol with 161,766 and Huasteco with 120,739.
5. For detailed information about the endangerment situation of specific families, the reader is referred to reports listed below:
   - B, L and M 1994 Vol. I: Yutoazteca (Dakin), Totonacan (MacKay), Tabasco (Perez-Gonzalez), Mixe-Zoquean (Wichmann), Maya (Hopkins and Josserand), Otopamean (Bartholomew).
   - B, L and M 1995 Vol. II: Mixtecano y Zapoteco (Smith-Stark), Chinanteco (Merrifield), Popolocan (Veerman-Leichsenring), Tlapaneco (Carrasco Zuñiga) and Huave (Hollenbach).
6. The situation is, of course, very complex, a good example of it being the detailed case the *Mixtec* and *Zapotec* families of languages by Smith-Stark (1995).
7. The list of languages below, also provided by Kaufman, includes "the languages which lack one of the three components of an adequate documentation (G = grammar, T = texts, L = dictionary). In each of the groups listed below there are some communities where children are learning the language, but in all groups, there are languages or large important dialect areas where children are no longer learning the language". Kaufman does "not consider most SIL dictionaries to be adequate because of [a] incomplete specification of phonological properties, [b] incomplete specification of grammatical properties of morphemes and stems. Mostly they are also too short."

Language	*Lacks*
Chinanteco [6+ languages]	t, g, l
Zapoteco [10+ languages]	t, g, lt
Trique [3 languages]	t, g, l
Mixteco [6+ languages]	t, g, l
Amuzgo [2 languages]	t, g, l
Cuicateco	t, g
Sierra de Puebla Nahuat	t, g, l
Tarasco	t, g?, l

Language	*Lacks*
Tojolabal	t, g
Chontal, Yokot'an [Mayan]	t, g, l?

8. This list reflects the knowledge accumulated by Kaufman over thirty years of fieldwork in the region and corresponds to the work to be done to meet his standards of documentation, not that there does not exist more documentation than he acknowledges here. The list does not reflect either the issue of how available accumulated documentation is at this point, as much more than is available to the newcomer to Mexican linguistics remains in the form of personal archives of linguists.
9. There are, however, still some *MixeZoquean*, many *Zapotecan*, many *Nahua*, some *Totonacan*, and several *Popolocan* languages for which no work has been scheduled so far.
10. There have been, for instance, televized political discussions in *Purépecha* with subtitles in *Spanish*, sponsored by INALI. The Institute's main challenge is going to be the lack of appropriately trained speakers, hence the importance of the training programs mentioned earlier.
11. The principal source of information for this report on the endangered languages of Guatemala is from personal communication with Nora England (see England 1992, 1996, 1998), and personal communication with OKMA members, Eladio Mateo Toledo (B'alam) in particular. Additional specific information on language endangerment and under-documentation was also provided by Terence Kaufman and Roberto Zavala (p.c. 2002).
12. Although the attention will be focused on the large Mayan family of languages which predominates in Guatemala, it is worth noting that another indigenous language of another family of languages is spoken on the Caribbean Coast of the country. The Garifuna, whose language is of the Carib-Arawak family of languages number about 16,000 in Guatemala. Other Garifuna communities are found in Belize and Honduras.
13. As mentioned earlier, there are more than 1,5 million speakers of *Mayan* languages in neighboring Mexico, with both large and very small languages. The most endangered language communities there are border communities.
14. The following North American linguists became *Mayan* specialists in the course of three two-year phases of funding:

Mayan specialists

1972 and 73 (phase I)	Nora England and Norman on *Mam, K'ichee', Kaqchikel.*
1974 and 75 (phase II)	Tom Larsen on *Awakatek*, Steve Stewart on *Q'eqchi'*, Karen Dakin on *Q'anjob'al* and *Akatek*.
1976 and 77 (phase III)	Margaret Datz on *Popti'*, Glenn Ayres on *Ixil*, Linda Munson on *Mam*, Robin Quizar on *Ch'orti'*, Tom Larsen on *K'ichee'*.

The activities of the PLFM were curtailed by the ongoing state of insecurity that reigned in the country and peaked in the early 1980's (the years of civil war euphemistically talked about as "la violencia"). When it was possible to resume activities, England offered *Mayan linguistics courses* for native speakers through the PLFM. The languages involved were the following:

Mayan linguistic courses

1988	Mam, K'ichee', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', Wastek, Tz'utujil, Q'anjob'al, Poqomam, Ch'orti' (16 Mayan students)
1989	Mam, K'ichee', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', Poqomam, Chuj, Achi, Ixil, Tz'utujiil, Popti'. (25 Mayan students)

The graduates of these courses were never made members of the PLFM, but many are still active and several are in OKMA (see 3.3.).

15. The programs were created and developed under the direction of Guillermina Herrera, Dean of Humanities, a graduate of the University of Iowa, where she studied under Nora England.
16. A new DEL program was started in 2005 by a consortium of the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Smithsonian Institute. The DEL project includes the following three languages and linguists: *Pipil* of El Salvador (Lyle Campbell), *Mocho* of Mexico (Laura Martin) and *Xinca* of Guatemala (Roberto Zavala).
17. The revitalization project includes multimedia support for the teaching of the language (Lemmus 2003) and the creation of computer assisted language learning materials (Ward 2002).
18. The information for Honduras was obtained through Danilo Salamanca, specialist of *Miskitu* of Nicaragua and Honduras, who located the sources used.
19. The inventories of ethnic groups of Honduras often include *Chortis*, for which there is no figure available, and no speakers left.
20. Some linguistic study of the language has been carried out by P. Monro at UCLA with *Garifuna*-speaking residents of Los Angeles, California.
21. Dennis Holt, who did fieldwork on the language twenty years ago (Holt 1986) was called back to the country to be consultant for the Ministry of Education in the early 2000 and a Honduran university professor is said to have been working with the community, too.
22. In addition, a major research program of Linguists for Nicaragua has focused on *Nicaraguan Sign Language*. It has been directed by Judy Kegl. Although the challenge there is to attend to the development and standardization of a language rather than to the opposite work of documenting a moribund indigenous language, it is worth mentioning for being work on another precarious type of language.
23. The first phase (1985–93) was supported by NSF, NEH, and the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological research. The second phase (2004–2006) is being financed by the HRELDP of SOAS, London.

24. The sources of information on the actual situation of the indigenous languages of Costa Rica come from Rojas Chaves (1997) and personal communication with Adolfo Constenla, professor of linguistics at the Universidad de Costa Rica, major figure of *Chibchan* Studies (Constenla 1989, 1991).

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Institute for Linguistic Research and Cultural Recovery.

Chapter 5
Endangered Languages in USA and Canada[1]

Akira Yamamoto

1. Introduction

Various linguists have estimated that there were 300 to 600 indigenous languages in North America at the time of the first European arrival. Mithun (1999: 2) also observes:

> Some of the languages are still spoken skillfully by people of all ages, such as Navajo with well over 100,000 speakers. The overall situation is critical, however. Almost all of the languages still in use are endangered: fewer children are learning them every year, as in the case of Navajo, or children are no longer learning them at all. Well over a third of the languages spoken at contact have already disappeared. Another quarter are now remembered by only a small number of elderly speakers. Nearly all are likely to be gone by the end of the twenty-first century.

Goddard (1996: 1–16; with an excellent updated map), surveying major works in linguistic studies of North America, identifies 34 language families and 28 language isolates:

> Language Families (number of languages): 1. Algic (45 languages), 2. Alsean (2), 3. Atakapan (2), 4. Caddoan (6), 5. Chimakuan (2), 6. Chinookan (3), 7. Chumashan (6), 8. Cochimí-Yuman (15), 9. Comecrudan (3), 10. Coosan (2), 11. Eskimo-Aleut (13), 12. Iroquoian (11), 13. Keresan (2), 14. Kiowa-Tanoan (7), 15. Maiduan (3), 16. Muskogean (7), 17. Nadene (47), 18. Otomanguean (1), 19. Palaihnihan (2), 20. Plateau Penution (4), 21. Pomoan (7), 22. Salinan (2), 23. Salishan (23), 24. Shastan (4), 25. Siouan-Catawban (17), 26. Takelman (4), 27. Timucuan (2), 28. Tsimshianic (2), 29. Utian (15), 30. Uto-Aztecan (26), 31. Wakashan (6), 32. Wintuan (2), 33. Yokutsan (6), 34. Yukian (2), and 35–63. Language Isolates (Adai, Aranama, Beothuk, Calusa, Cayuse, Chimariko, Chitimacha, Coahuilteco, Cotoname, Esselen, Guaicura, Haida, Karankawa, Karok, Kootenani, Maratino, Natchez, Naolan, Quinigua, Seri, Siuslaw, Solano, Tonkawa, Tunica, Washoe, Yana, Yuchi, Zuni).

Of these 329 languages, 46 have significant number of children as their speakers, 91 are spoken by adults but no or very few children, 72 by only a few of the oldest people and 120 are extinct (Goddard 1996: 3 citing Krauss 1991).