

Abstract

The thesis is based on an argument that the minority language Rarámuri, as well as other indigenous languages of Mexico, is found in unequal position to the Spanish language, coinciding with the indigenous communities' socioeconomic conditions in a comparison to the central majority of the Spanish-speaking population. The indigenous mother tongue is often perceived by its speakers as an obstacle for achieving a better socioeconomic situation and experiencing the modernized lifestyle of the majority. Often, it is one of the first cultural attributes that is being abandoned. The speakers of minority languages are also an object of the state's educational policies that are presented as supportive for vernacular cultures and languages, however they have mostly opposite effect, which reveals the fact their essential intention is an assimilation. In this study I focus on three aspects of this sociolinguistic issue: firstly, the general approach and educational politics of Mexican State in regard of indigenous population in the twentieth century. Secondly, the description of main extralinguistic factors that condition vitality of a language, in this case it is the Rarámuri language. And thirdly, a field work research of language situation in selected communities with different measures of bilingualism. The study attempts to be a contribution to the actual contemporary issue of global transformation and a loss of cultural and language diversity.

Keywords: minority language, Mexico, Tarahumara, Rarámuri, bilingualism, language situation, language behaviour, indigenous communities, education, Tarahumara language, Spanish language