

Mexican Diversity

Mexico is as diverse as Canada, even more.

Not everyone is aware of this fact, but Mexico has one of the richest and most diverse cultures in the world. Aside from its food, its music, its culture and traditions, Mexico excels in the realm of linguistics. [The Mexican government](#) recognizes 68 national languages, 63 of which are native languages. Some of the [most spoken languages](#) are Nahuatl (1,376,026 speakers), Maya (759,000 speakers) and Mixteco (423,216).

It is crucial to be aware of the importance that these languages have had in modern Mexico since Mexican Spanish has been heavily influenced by all these languages, [particularly Nahuatl](#); some examples of this are:

- **Esquite:** from the Nahuatl *Izquitl*,
- **Apapachar:** from the Nahuatl *apapachoa*,
- **Aguacate:** from the Nahuatl *aguacatl*,
- **Chocolate:** from the Nahuatl *xocolatl*,

Today, Mexico protects and encourages its citizens to be bilingual, but it has not always been like this. Soon after the Spaniards conquered Mexico, they tried to eliminate the Native's history, and they were accomplishing this by forcing their language and religion to the natives. Although Spanish was expected to be spoken by Natives, [churchmen](#) were also encouraged to learn the Natives Language so that they were able to communicate with the people. During this time (the XVI century), the law dictated that Native people needed to speak Castilian, while the Spaniards learned "the native's tongue." Something that a lot of scholars find interesting since the law accepted and rejects language diversity.

If we come closer to modern times, Mexico has learned to accept and support its Native speakers; even then, it does not mean that Mexico is fair and square with all its population. Back in the 90's [Native communities in Chiapas](#) were affected by the government because it decided to pull away from teaching Native languages. This conflict created the modern issue that Mexico faces: the lack of education of Native communities. The government pulled funds from this sector of the community because they feared teaching children about another language would eventually eliminate Spanish as the main language. During this time, scholars tried to prove the government wrong by [testing](#) how bilingual children, whose first language was native, were affected by this issue. Furthermore, the choice created inequality between native languages where languages like Nahuatl, Maya and Mixteco grew exponentially while other languages like Paipai, Kumiai and Cucapá started to go extinct.

For the past couple of decades, there has been an increase of interest from the linguistic community to study Mexico's Colonial period. Some people find it interesting because of the [ethnography](#) and the historical value that it brings to Mesoamerica. In contrast, others wish to examine the [sociological](#) effects that native languages have in the country.