Exploring grassroots efforts to revitalise Yucatec Maya in Mexico

josep cru
Newcastle University, United Kingdom

As a consequence of growing indigenous mobilisation in Mexico, particularly after the Zapatista uprising in 1994, there have been significant legislative changes concerning indigenous languages and cultures in Mexico. Thus, article 2 of the Mexican Constitution was amended in 2001 to acknowledge the contribution of indigenous peoples to the multicultural composition of that country. In 2003 the Law of Education was reformed to include a paragraph stating that speakers of indigenous languages will have access to compulsory education both in their own language and in Spanish. Also in 2003, the General Law on Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples was approved, becoming the first official legislative text that explicitly addresses the promotion of indigenous languages in Mexico. Two years later the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) was created in Mexico City with the aim of cataloguing and standardising the indigenous languages of Mexico. These top down initiatives, which stem from official institutions, may have a positive impact on the public recognition of indigenous languages in Mexico but they have enormous limitations for actual revitalisation of linguistic practices on the ground. Against this background, this presentation looks at current efforts to promote Maya in non-official domains of use such as the Internet, and particularly social media such as Facebook. The focus will be on grassroots initiatives that arise from local contexts, horizontal linguistic practices and speakers as final agents of language management.

Keywords: "social media", "revitalisation", "microlanguage planning".