

# **Education and Interculturality in Mexico**

An analysis on interculturality:

*Tsikbal'ob* at the

Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo

and other parts of Mexico

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*Ser en el mundo, ser nosotros*

*Wiinikil yoók'ol kaab, jée bixo'one'*

*To be in the world, to be ourselves<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> (Slogan of the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo)

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## Kurzfassung

Der Titel dieser Diplomarbeit ist Erziehung, Bildung und Interkulturalität in Mexiko - eine Analyse über Interkulturalität, *Tsikbal'ob* an der *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* (*UIMQRoo*) in Mexiko. Die Forschungsarbeit für diese Diplomarbeit wurde in Mexiko durchgeführt. *Tsikbal'ob* ist ein Maya Wort und bedeutet Unterhaltung. An der *UIMQRoo* und anderen Teilen Mexikos wurden Unterhaltungen durchgeführt, um mehr über Interkulturalität herauszufinden. Diese Arbeit zeigt und analysiert die Ergebnisse dieser Unterhaltungen.

**Schlagwörter:** Mexiko, Quintana Roo, Interkulturalität, Bildung, Mehrsprachigkeit, Zweisprachigkeit, Plurikulturalität.

## Abstract

The title of this diploma thesis is Education and Interculturality in Mexico – an analysis on interculturality, *Tsikbal'ob* at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)* and other parts of Mexico. In this work education and the meaning of the term interculturality in Mexico are discussed and analysed. The research work for this diploma thesis was carried out in Mexico. *Tsikbal'ob* is a Maya word and means conversations. Conversations were carried out at the *UIMQRoo* and other parts of Mexico to find out more about interculturality. This work illustrates and analyses the results of these conversations.

**Keywords:** Mexico, Quintana Roo, Interculturality, Education, Bilingualism, Pluricultural, Plurilinguistic.

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## List of Abbreviations

UIMQRoo	<i>Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo</i> Intercultural Maya University of Quintana Roo
L1	First Language (native language, mother tongue)
L2	Second Language
CONAFE	<i>Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo</i> The National Council for Educational Development
CDI	<i>Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas</i> The National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples
CGEIB	<i>Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe</i> General Coordination of Intercultural Bilingual Education
EI	<i>Educación Intercultural</i> Intercultural Education
UI	<i>Universidad Intercultural</i> Intercultural University
EIB	<i>Educación Intercultural Bilingüe</i> Intercultural Bilingual Education
EMS	<i>Educación Media Superior</i> Higher secondary Education
BI	<i>Bachillerato Intercultural</i> Intercultural College
INALI	<i>Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas</i> National Indigenous Languages Institute
INI	<i>Instituto Nacional Indigenista</i> National Indigenist Institute
Pronabes	<i>Programa Nacional de Becas para la Educación Superior</i> National Programme for Grants for Higher Education



<i>Redui</i>	<i>Red de Universidades Interculturales</i> Network of Intercultural Universities
<i>SEP</i>	<i>Secretaría de Educación Pública</i> Secretariat of Public Education
<i>UNESCO</i>	<i>Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura</i> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<i>SIL</i>	Summer Institute of Linguistics

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## Foreword

As a daughter of an Austrian father and British mother I grew up in an intercultural bilingual environment. I never felt that this was a disadvantage for me and was always proud of being bilingual. As a child it was natural for me to communicate without any problems with my family and friends either in German or in English. However, I quickly realised at school that not all children who had grown up bilingually felt the same way. I remember that my mother once held a short presentation at school together with a friend; they spoke about the United Kingdom and the English language. Thereby the other students had the chance to meet native speakers and learn more about the country, language and culture. Looking back, I think it would have been interesting for us as children to also gain insight to other languages and cultures of students from our school. Although there were students with different native languages in our classrooms at school, our classrooms were not intercultural. I went on to learn French and Spanish at school and then decided to study translating and interpreting at the University of Innsbruck.

In 2009/10 I studied literature and language at the *Universidad Central del Ecuador* in Quito. I took a Kichwa class and wanted to know more about the indigenous languages and cultures of Ecuador. Therefore, I searched for an internship and had the opportunity to work at the offices of UNICEF and DINEIB (National Directorate for Bilingual Intercultural Education, *Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*). My tasks included the translation of the website, participation at workshops and the visit of bilingual intercultural education centres. Since then intercultural bilingual education has fascinated me. So I decided to write my first diploma thesis about 'Intercultural Bilingual Education in Ecuador and the Importance of Intercultural Communication for Translators and Interpreters'. During the research for my first diploma thesis, I noticed that there was much more research that could be done and decided to continue my work on this topic.

One of the first bilingual intercultural programmes was carried out in Mexico and Guatemala. Therefore, I decided to concentrate on Mexico and find out more about the programmes, difficulties, critiques, challenges and successes in this area. When I found out that there were different intercultural universities in Mexico, I knew that visiting one of

these universities would be a good starting point. After contacting different intercultural universities, I chose the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)* for my research work. During my three-month-stay in Mexico I collected empirical material through the *tskibal*, which means conversation in Maya. This is a method used by some students at the *UIMQRoo*. Additionally to the conversations, I carried out questionnaires and class observations at the *UIMQRoo*. The contacts I established with students, teachers and people from different communities were very helpful and my work would not have been as successful without the help of these people. My research stay in Mexico allowed me to look closer at the reality of intercultural bilingual education and especially the meaning of interculturality. The findings of my research work are analysed, explained and discussed in this diploma thesis.

## 1. Introduction and Overview

This diploma thesis researches education and interculturality in Mexico. The intention is to explore some relative aspects that led to the creation of intercultural education in Mexico and find out the meaning of interculturality and whether indigenous languages are taught at school in Mexico.

This work will contribute to the existent literature about intercultural education. Existing literature is analysed and theory compared with practice. The findings and the conclusion of this work are not the only right answer.

This work is divided into theory, empirical evidence and interpretation. It consists of thirteen chapters. **Chapter one** is the introduction and overview. **Chapter two** focuses on the research question of this work. This chapter includes the justification for this work, the main question and objective and the specific questions and objectives that this work intends to answer. **Chapter three** explains the different research methods used in this work. The following methods and techniques are described in chapter three: the *tsikbal*, observation of classes and questionnaires. **Chapter four** focuses on Mexico – a diverse and pluricultural country. This chapter includes information about the geographical situation, number of inhabitants, languages and indigenous peoples, constitution and other laws. It also looks at the indigenous peoples and languages in Mexico. There is a special focus on the state of Quintana Roo. **Chapter five** is the introduction to the main topic of this work, namely bilingual intercultural education. This chapter focuses on the definition, history, purpose, goals and effectiveness of bilingual intercultural education. This chapter intends to answer the question whether bilingual intercultural education in Mexico is a myth or not. **Chapter six** focuses on education in Mexico from preschool to university. It includes information about the educational reform in Mexico. Then the results of the questionnaire and *tsikbal* about education in Mexico are analysed and discussed. The National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE) is introduced. Then the Bachillerato Intercultural and Intercultural Universities are introduced, discussed and analysed. **Chapter seven** introduces the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (INALI). **Chapter eight** analyses the translation and interpretation of indigenous languages in Mexico. **Chapter**

**nine** focuses on indigenous human rights. This chapter includes different laws concerning indigenous people. **Chapter ten** intends to collect different definitions of interculturality. This chapter includes the findings of the research work carried out in Mexico regarding the meaning of interculturality. Furthermore it includes critical views of interculturality. **Chapter eleven** focuses on the term Maya and culture. This chapter intends to explain the term Maya and analyses the attitude towards indigenous languages. **Chapter twelve** is an outlook – towards intercultural plurilingual education. **Chapter thirteen** is the conclusion.

This chapter included the introduction and the overview of this work; the next part concentrates on the research question.

## 2. Research Question

This chapter includes the research question, general objective and special questions and objectives of this work.

While doing my research for my first thesis on the topic 'Bilingual Intercultural Education in Ecuador and the Importance of Intercultural Communication for Translators and Interpreters' I stumbled over many articles and books about intercultural education in Mexico. Therefore, I wanted to find out more about intercultural education in Mexico and the concept of interculturality. However, I felt it was important to include empirical findings in my diploma thesis and be able to collect information directly in Mexico and interview teachers, parents and students. I contacted different intercultural universities in Mexico and decided to use the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)* as a starting point and focus of my research work.

Without the research work I conducted in Mexico, with a focus on the *UIMQRoo*, my work would not have turned out this way. The research work in Mexico enhanced the results of this diploma thesis.

This work analyses intercultural education since the creation of the intercultural universities in Mexico. This research work was carried out in Mexico, with a focus on the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)*.

### **Research questions**

How is interculturality understood in Mexico and how is the idea of interculturality put into practice at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*?

### **General objective**

Find out how interculturality is understood in Mexico and how the idea of interculturality is put into practice at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*.



**Specific question**

What do the professors and students think about interculturality and how do they practice it? How does the education in indigenous languages work in Mexico?

**Specific objective**

Understand what the professors and students think about interculturality and how they practice it. Understand how the education of indigenous languages works in Mexico.

In order to respond to these research questions, the *tsikbal*, class observations and a questionnaire were used. All these methods and techniques are explained in chapter three.

This chapter was about the research question of this work. The research methods and techniques used to answer the research questions are explained in chapter three.

### 3. Investigation Methods

This chapter focuses on the research methods and techniques used in this empirical work. According to Bernart and Krapp (2005) empirical social research can be divided into qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and interpretation. Current approaches no longer just favour quantitative or qualitative methods, but rather a mix of methods. (cf. Bernart and Krapp, 2005, p. 5-6)

Therefore, a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods is used in this work – the *tsikbal*, observation of classes and a questionnaire. In conversations with Dr. Castillo Cocom, professor at the *UIMQRoo*, it became clear that using traditional interviews was not the ideal technique for collecting empirical material for this work. The *tsikbal* is explained in chapter 3.1. Another research technique used in this work is class observations. This research technique helps to understand the teaching and learning methods at the *UIMQRoo* and other schools in Mexico, it is explained in chapter 3.2. The last research technique used in this work is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed for the students of the *UIMQRoo* in order to collect information about the languages they speak and their opinion about interculturality – it is explained in chapter 3.3.

#### 3.1. The Tsikbal: Research Technique for the Collection of Data

This chapter focuses on the *tsikbal* as a technique for the collection of data. Before explaining the *tsikbal* as a research technique it is important to read the definition of this term in the Maya dictionary from Barrera Vásquez (2007):

1 **TSIKBAL** 2, 4, 5, 8, 11 : conversación 5 : plática 8 : cuento, parla 11 : charla, palique 2. **TSIKBALIL** 8 : ídem 3. **hub tsikbal** 2 : ídem 4. **choon t'anil** 11 : charla 5. **kan** 11 : conversación; **kanankil**: conversación entre muchos.

2 **TSIKBAL** 1, 5, 7, 8 : hablar 1 : estar en conversación 2, 5: hablar de burla 2 : burlar de palabra o requebrar 3 : tratar algún negocio; burlar de palabra en conversación 4, 5, 7, 8 : conversar 4 : decir cuentos o gracias 5, 8, : placticar 6 : hablar cosas de burla; [...] (Barrera Vásquez, 2007, p. 860-861)

The term *tsikbal* is defined as a conversation, talk or conversation between many when used as a noun. It can also be used as a verb meaning speaking, talking, having a conversation etc.

Dr. Castillo Cocom from the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)* developed the *tsikbal*, as an alternative to ethnographic interviews. The *tsikbal* is a conversation, generally between two interlocutors or a small group of people. However, it is easier with two people. The group should not be larger than five people, it is more difficult with a group, but possible if the topic of the conversation allows it. It is a conversation that takes place when there is a great level of trust, confidence and sympathy between the speakers. (cf. Castillo Cocom, *Tsikbal*, 5.11.2013)

This research technique has been tested and put into practice by Maya speakers in several theses at the *UIMQRoo*. Dr. Castillo Cocom mentions that it is only possible between Maya speakers or people who share the same language and belong to similar cultural groups. An attempt to use it in this work is made to show that this is possible.

Once the conversation has taken place, the conversations can be complimented with reflexivity and dialogic or vice versa. The transcript of the *tsikbal* can include a description of the environment in which the conversation is taking place. This helps the reader understand and imagine the context in which the events are occurring. (cf. Castillo Cocom, *Tsikbal*, 5.11.2013)

There is one problem when using the *tsikbal* as an investigation technique. Although the main objective is to get rid of authoritarian techniques it fails to do this. When using the *tsikbal* as a research technique, a kind of artificial *tsikbal* is created and this leads to the question whether it is ethical to use it for research. Maybe the way to make it less anti-ethical is to inform the interlocutor that I want to have a *tsikbal*, however that I will focus on the question of my work in some moments. The problem is that one interlocutor wants to obtain information for a certain reason. And that means that the conversation is no longer a

conversation but something that looks and sounds like a conversation in which one of the speakers profits. There is an imbalance. I cannot change this fact, but being aware of this problematic this allows me to establish an honest conversation with the interlocutor. (cf. Castillo Cocom, Tsikbal, 5.11.2013)

Castillo Cocom explains that the *tsikbal* is revolutionary; it takes away the pressure from the student, the persons speaking to each other, the readers or the person who reads the work.

**El efecto del tsikbal es revolucionario, le quita la presión al estudiante, al conversante, al conversador y al lector o a la persona que lee el trabajo.**

(Castillo Cocom, Tsikbal, 27.11.2013)

Castillo Cocom explains that many students are worried about conducting interviews and do not know enough about empirical work when they have to write their thesis. A solution to this problem is to remind them that the easiest technique for collecting data is having a conversation with people. Castillo Cocom tells the students to do what they know best, have a conversation – and then the majority of your work is ready.

**Haz lo que sabes bien, es conversar y ya tienes una gran parte de tu tesis lista.** (Castillo Cocom, Tsikbal, 27.11.2013)

Using the *tsikbal* allows students to have conversations with friends, family members and other people without feeling this pressure of having to do an interview. The *tsikbal* is the basis of Maya knowledge. The *tsikbal* also enables a short peak into the Maya philosophy. This would not be possible in an interview. (cf. Castillo Cocom, Tsikbal, 5.11.2013)

After gathering information about the *tsikbal* in conversations with Dr. Castillo Cocom, the first *tsikbal* was carried out. For the first few conversations no voice recorder was used because it felt more natural speaking to the students without asking them if the

conversation could be recorded. This way the students did not feel intimidated and a good level of trust was established.

In this chapter included the definition of the *tsikbal*, the development of the *tsikbal* and the way in which the *tsikbal* is used as a research method. This was one research method used in this work; the next method was the observation of classes.

### 3.2. Class Observations

This chapter focuses on the observation of classes. This chapter explains why the decision was made to use this method and which kinds of classes were observed.

Class observations as a research method were chosen to understand the teaching methods used at the *UIMQRoo* and at the other schools visited. The first class at the *UIMQRoo* was about indigenous human rights with Dr. Castillo Cocom. The students discussed the term indigenous and Maya. The observations from this class are explained and analysed in chapter nine and ten.

A further class that was observed was intercultural education. This class was especially interesting because the students and the professor discussed different terms related to interculturality. Furthermore, they watched documentaries related to education, e.g. 'La Educación Prohibida' (The Prohibited Education), which is an independent documentary about alternative education practices in Latin America and Spain. Further observations made in this class are discussed and analysed in chapter ten, which is about the meaning of interculturality.

A further class observed was an English lesson, which was very interactive. The students had to repeat words and sentences after the professor and that way they learned the correct pronunciation. One task was to walk around in class and ask the other students questions. The three questions were: Where are you from? What is your first language? What is your second language?

Name	From	1 <sup>st</sup> language	2 <sup>nd</sup> language
Jesus	Morelos	Spanish	English
Ruben	Sa Va R	Maya/Spanish	-
Dani	Morelos	Spanish	-
Daisy	Morelos	Spanish	-
Marisol	Kopche	Spanish	Maya
Jorge	JMM	Spanish	Maya
Diana	Chetumal	Spanish	English
Arnulfo	Pulyuc	Spanish	Maya
Vicente	Emiliano Zapata	Spanish	English

*Table 1: First and Second Language of Students (Source: Questionnaire by author)*

This table shows the answers of the students questioned. It shows that the majority of the students speak Spanish as a mother tongue. Only one person said that Maya and Spanish were his native languages. After the English class one student explained that she spoke Maya at home and that Maya was her native language, however, the rest of the students explained that they could understand Maya but that Spanish was their mother tongue.

This chapter focused on the observation of classes, which was used as a research technique. As we can see, this technique was helpful to understand more about the teaching methods at university and at the schools and to find out which languages the students spoke.

The *tsikbal* and observation of classes were very helpful for collecting information for this diploma thesis. However, more information about the number of students who spoke Maya at home was required. So the decision was made to elaborate a questionnaire. The following chapter focuses on this questionnaire.

### 3.3. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was elaborated to find out more about the languages the students of the *UIMQRoo* speak at home and which languages they were taught at school. This chapter focuses on the questionnaire used at the *UIMQRoo*. The results of this questionnaire are analysed in chapter six.

According to Kallus (2010) the following steps are important for the elaboration of a questionnaire:

- 1. Delimitation and clarification of the conceptive range of key and target group [...]**
- 2. Specification of range of key and collection of examples [...]**
- 3. Aggregation of manifestations of sections, which variate in a similar way in different characteristics**
- 4. Definition of the characteristic manifestation variations and definition of the answer scale [...]**
- 5. Phrasing of the items**
- 6. Check linguistic texture, simplicity and comprehensibility of items**
- 7. Definition of instructions, anchors and guidelines**
- 8. Specification of chronology of items**
- 9. Conduct of study to check the subtests/items**
- 10. Abbreviation/addition of questionnaire**
- 11. Definition of versions of questionnaire**
- 12. Normalisation and evaluation guidelines**
- 13. Validation and interpretation guidelines**

(cf. Kallus, 2010, pp. 14-15, translation by author)

The students of the *UIMQRoo* were the target group chosen, so students from different semesters and different fields of study were questioned. Before elaborating the questionnaire conversations with students from different courses were carried out. The decision was then made to divide the questionnaire into three parts – questions about the language(s) they speak at home, questions about the language(s) taught at school and an open question about interculturality. For the first and second part, namely the questions about the languages, the students had three options – Spanish, Maya, other language(s). The students were allowed to write or select more than one answer. The instruction was written in Spanish. After checking the spelling and structure of the questionnaire, it was tested on three students. The test showed that the structure had to be changed once more and a question had to be added, because it was important to know where the students were from. Finally, 61 students from the *UIMQRoo* were questioned and then the questionnaires were analysed.

This chapter focused on the questionnaire used in the research work at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*. The results of this questionnaire are discussed and analysed in chapter six.

Before turning to the main topic of this work – education and interculturality, a closer look should be taken at Mexico in order to understand the linguistic situation of this pluricultural and plurilinguistic country.



### Cuestionario sobre Educación y Interculturalidad

Soy de la Universidad de Innsbruck en Austria (Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck) y estudio traducción e interpretación. Estoy escribiendo mi tesis de maestría sobre la educación y interculturalidad en México. Necesito la ayuda de los estudiantes de la UIMQRoo para la colección de datos y les agradecería mucho su participación. Les pido responder las preguntas en forma honesta y correcta, no hay respuestas falsas, todas las respuestas me van a ayudar para mi investigación. Pueden elegir o escribir más de una respuesta. Los cuestionarios son anónimos, después de responder el cuestionario lo ponen en el sobre para que yo no sepa de quiénes son.

1. ¿Qué estás estudiando en la UIMQRoo y en qué semestre estás?

Licenciatura: \_\_\_\_\_ Semestre: \_\_\_\_\_

2. ¿En qué idioma hablas con tus abuelos?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿En qué idioma hablas con tus padres?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

4. ¿En qué idioma hablas con tus hermanos?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

5. ¿Qué idioma(s) enseñaron en tu escuela preescolar?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre y ubicación de la escuela: \_\_\_\_\_

6. ¿Qué idioma(s) enseñaron en tu primaria?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre y ubicación de la escuela: \_\_\_\_\_

7. ¿Qué idioma(s) enseñaron en tu secundaria?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre y ubicación de la escuela: \_\_\_\_\_

8. ¿Qué idioma(s) enseñaron en la preparatoria/en el bachillerato?

Español ☐ Maya ☐ Otros Idiomas ☐ Cuáles? \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre y ubicación de la escuela: \_\_\_\_\_

9. ¿Qué significa interculturalidad para tí?

10. ¿Cuántos años tienes? \_\_\_\_\_

11. ¿De dónde eres? \_\_\_\_\_

*¡Gracias por tu ayuda!*

*Thank you for your help!*

*Yuum bo'otik teeoh*

Figure 1: Questionnaire for Students at the UIMQRoo

## 4. Mexico – Diverse and Pluricultural Country

This chapter focuses on Mexico; it includes information about the geographical situation of Mexico, the states and population of Mexico, the indigenous peoples and languages of Mexico, the constitution and the general act of linguistic rights of indigenous people. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the educational reform and analyses the widespread protests in Mexico. The state of Quintana Roo is explained in more detail because the majority of the empirical material used in this work was collected in this state.

### 4.1. Geographical Situation, States and Population of Mexico

The United States of Mexico is part of the North American continent. The country borders with the United States of America to the north and with Guatemala and Belize to the south. The capital city is Mexico City. The land area is 1 964 375 km<sup>2</sup>, the continental area 1 959 248 km<sup>2</sup> and the total area of islands is 5 127 km<sup>2</sup>. (SRE, 2012)



Figure 2: Map of Mexico (Geoatlas, 2000)

According to the National Institute for Statistics and Geography (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*), the total population of Mexico is 112 336 538. (INEGI, 2013a)

There are 31 states and one Federal District, namely Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Coahuila de Zaragoza, Colima, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Distrito Federal, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, México, Michoacán de Ocampo, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave, Yucatán, Zacatecas. The capital city of the United States of Mexico is Mexico City as already mentioned. (cf. INEGI 2013b)



Figure 3: Map of the States of Mexico (Geoatlas, 2000)

The following table shows the number of inhabitants according to the states of the United States of Mexico:

State	Population	State	Population
Aguascalientes	1 184 996	Morelos	1 777 227
Baja California	3 155 070	Nayarit	1 084 979
Baja California Sur	637 026	Nuevo León	4 653 458
Campeche	822 441	Oaxaca	3 801 962
Coahuila de Zaragoza	2 748 391	Puebla	5 779 829
Colima	650 555	Querétaro	1 827 937
Chiapas	4 796 580	Quintana Roo	1 325 578
Chihuahua	3 406 465	San Luis Potosí	2 585 518
Distrito Federal	8 851 080	Sinaloa	2 767 761
Durango	1 632 934	Sonora	2 662 480
Guanajuato	5 486 372	Tabasco	2 238 603
Guerrero	3 388 768	Tamaulipas	3 258 554
Hidalgo	2 665 018	Tlaxcala	1 169 936
Jalisco	7 350 682	Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave	7 643 194
México	15 175 862	Yucatán	1 955 577
Michoacán de Ocampo	4 351 037	Zacatecas	1 490 668

*Table 2: Population of Mexican States (INEGI 2013b, edited by author)*

The state with the highest population is Mexico with 15 175 863 inhabitants, followed by the Federal District with 8 851 080 inhabitants. Veracruz and Jalisco are also states with a high population, reaching more than 7,000,000 inhabitants in each state. (cf. INEGI 2013b)

Not only the geographical situation, states and population are important for the research of this topic, but also the indigenous peoples and languages of Mexico play an important role.

#### 4.2. Indigenous Peoples and Languages of Mexico

There are different ethnic groups in Mexico. According to the Foreign Ministry, 60% of the population is Mestizo, 30% Amerindian, 9% White European and 1% other. (SRE, 2012)

Mexico is a multilingual nation with 68 indigenous peoples and 364 linguistic variations and Spanish. 6 913 362 people (3 years and older) speak national indigenous languages. The present linguistic diversity in Mexico is registered in the National Indigenous Languages Catalogue (*Catálogo de las Lenguas Indígenas Nacionales*), which was published by the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (*Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas, INALI*) in 2008. (cf. INALI Poster, 2013)

According to the Foreign Ministry 12% of the population over 5 years of age speaks an indigenous language and cannot speak Spanish. 89.7% are Catholic, 4.9% Protestant, 0.1% Jewish, 2.1% state other religions and 3.2% no religion. (cf. SRE, 2012)

The following table shows a list of the indigenous languages of Mexico. This list was taken from a poster designed by the National Institute for Indigenous Languages.

Family	Group	Variation	Number of speakers <sup>2</sup>
álgica	Kickapoo	1	446
Yuto-nahua	Cora	8	21 445
	Guarijío	2	2 201
	Huichol	4	47 625
	Mayo	1	39 759
	Náhuatl	30	1 586 884
	Pápago	1	161
	Pima	3	867
	Tarahumara	5	89 503
	Tepehuano del norte	1	8 424
	Tepehuano del sur	3	29 481
	Yaqui	1	17 592
Cochimi-yumana	Cucapá	1	145
	Kiliwa	1	46
	Ku'ahl	1	-
	Kumiai	1	381
	Paipai	1	200
Seri	Seri	1	795
Oto-mangue	Amuzgo	4	53 122
	Chatino	6	47 327
	Chichimeco jonaz	1	2 295

2 Censo de Población y Vivienda 2010. INEGI-INALI (population and housing census)

	Chinanteco	11	137 413
	Chocholteco	3	814
	Cuicateco	3	13 037
	Ixcateco	1	190
	Mazahua	2	136 717
	Matlatzinca	1	1 106
	Mazateco	16	230 124
	Mixteco	81	496 038
	Otomí	9	288 052
	Pame	2	11 627
	Popoloca	4	18 485
	Tlahuica	1	745
	Tlapaneco	9	127 244
	Triqui	4	27 137
	Zapoteco	62	460 695
Maya	Akateko	1	- <sup>3</sup>
	Awakateko	1	1 997
	Chontal de Tabasco	4	37 224
	Ch'ol	2	222 051
	Chuj	1	2 632
	Huasteco	3	166 952
	Ixil	2	83
	Jakalteko	1	602
	K'iche'	3	391

3        Para el Censo 2010 este dato aún no se publica. En el II Conteo de Población y Vivienda 2005 se reportaron 532 hablantes. (For the census 2010 this data has not yet been published. 532 speakers were reported in the II counting of population and housing in 2005.)

	Kaqchikel	1	103
	Lacandón	1	926
	Mam	5	10 467
	Maya	1	795 499
	Q'anjob'al	1	9 625
	Q'echí'	1	1 279
	Qato'k	2	106
	Teko	1	53
	Tojolabal	1	54 201
	Tzeltal	4	474 298
	Tsotsil	7	429 168
Totonaco-tepehua	Tepehua	3	8 968
	Totonaco	7	250 252
Tarasca	Tarasco	1	128 344
Mixe-zoque	Ayapaneco	1	21
	Mixe	6	136 736
	Oluteco	1	50
	Popoluca de la sierra	1	35 050
	Sayulteco	1	941
	Texistepequeño	1	326
	Zoque	8	65 355
Chontal de Oaxaca	Chontal de Oaxaca	3	4 465
Huave	Huave	2	18 265

Table 3: Indigenous Languages in Mexico (INALI poster 2013, edited by author)



So according to this list by INALI, Náhuatl has the most speakers, namely 1 586 884. Followed by Maya with 795 499, Mixteco with 496 038, Tseltal with 474 298, Zapoteco with 460 695 and Tsotsil with 429 168 speakers.

The indigenous languages with the fewest speakers are Ku'ahl with no speakers registered, followed by Ayapaneco with 21, Kiliwa with 46, Oluteco with 50 and Teko with 53 speakers.

The languages with the most variations are Mixteco (81 variations), Zapoteco (62 variations), Náhuatl (30 variations), Mazateco (16 variations), Chinanteco (11 variations).

Jansenson and Sada (n.d) explain that it is very important to take pluriculturalism and multilingualism into account in Mexico, as it is part of the national reality. It is necessary to apply and respect the laws, which protect the linguistic rights of indigenous people and that we realise that there are gaps in the professional training in the country regarding indigenous communities. They think that the acceptance of this reality will allow them to grow not only as individuals but also as a country. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 436)

**Creemos que la aceptación de esta realidad nos permitirá crecer no solo como individuos sino también como país.** (Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 436)

As you can see Mexico is a pluricultural and multilingual country. This immense diversity is made visible by listing the number of languages and variations that exist in Mexico.

After this general information about Mexico, the state of Quintana Roo can be illustrated in more detail, this is the state where the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo is situated and where the majority of the empirical material for this work was collected.

### 4.3. Quintana Roo

The majority of the empirical material for this work was collected in Quintana Roo; therefore this chapter focuses on this southern state of Mexico.

The state of Quintana Roo has 1 325 578 inhabitants. The main languages spoken in this region are Spanish and Maya. English is also very dominant because of tourism. Quintana Roo is part of the Yucatan Peninsula and borders with the states of Yucatan and Campeche. Quintana Roo also shares a border with Belize. This map shows the location of Quintana Roo:



Figure 4: Map of Quintana Roo, Mexico (Geoatlas, 2004)

In the centre of José Maria Morelos there is a park, which is surrounded by churches. The park is full of elderly and young people and children playing in the playground. Women wearing the traditional clothing called *huipil* often pass by the park with their shopping bags and sit down to talk to each other. There are many *mototaxis* passing by, people getting on and off. The *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* is situated in José Maria Morelos. Most of the students and some teachers go to university by *mototaxi*. More information about the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* is provided later in this work.

This chapter focused on Mexico's geographical situation, the states, population, indigenous peoples and languages. The state of Quintana Roo was the state where the majority of the empirical material was collected.

The following chapter is the main focus of this diploma thesis, namely bilingual intercultural education. This chapter includes many of the conversations carried out in the course of the research work for this diploma thesis.

## 5. Bilingual Intercultural Education

This chapter explains the term bilingual intercultural education. It includes the history of bilingual intercultural education, the beginnings and information about the existing programmes. First of all there is a definition of bilingual intercultural education. Then there is an overview of the history of bilingual intercultural education in Mexico, this part explains the beginnings and the forerunners of this educational model. A further point illustrated in this chapter is the purpose and goals of bilingual intercultural education. This part analyses and discusses the theory and relates it to the practice in Mexico by including sections of the conversations carried out in Mexico. After looking at the purpose and goals, the effectiveness of bilingual schools is illustrated. This part also includes a section of a conversation (*tsikbal*) carried out in Mérida, Mexico.

### 5.1. The Definition of Bilingual Intercultural Education

**Bilingual Intercultural Education (BIE) or Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) is an education model designed for areas in which more than one language is spoken and the people are in contact with more than one culture. This bilingual intercultural education model is applied in many Latin American countries, where it is an alternative for indigenous people to the monolingual Hispanic schools. (López, 2001 cited in Mair, 2013, p.29)**

However, looking at the example of José Maria Morelos in Quintana Roo, which is an area in which Maya and Spanish are spoken and people are in contact with at least two different cultures, there were not enough alternatives to monolingual schools. Although many children come from homes where Maya is spoken, the main language they are taught at school is Spanish. In chapter six the education in Mexico and especially in José Maria Morelos is discussed in more detail.

**According to López and Küper the survival of the indigenous and other ethnic-cultural minorities in Latin American can be assured if the Latin American societies as a whole respect ethnic, cultural and linguistic**

**differences and overcome intolerance and racism.** (López and Küper, 2000, p. 6, cited in Mair, 2013, p.33)

How can it be assured that the Latin American societies as a whole respect ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences and overcome intolerance and racism? Is the construction of bilingual intercultural schools, intercultural colleges and intercultural universities the answer? Why are these spaces mostly created in areas where there is a high indigenous population and not in urban areas as well in order to achieve interculturality for the whole society? These questions are answered in this diploma thesis.

## 5.2. The History of Bilingual Intercultural Education

When reading about the history of bilingual intercultural education the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) often appears. According to López and Sichra (2008) the SIL did not only translate but also helped governments, which had signed contracts to incorporate indigenous communities.

**The history of bilingual intercultural education dates back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Teachers experimented by working in indigenous communities in Mexico (Brice Heath, 1972), Peru and Ecuador (López and Sichra, 2002). In the late 1930s the United States based Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) played an important role in Mexico. Various governments signed contracts with the SIL. The main mission of SIL was the translation of the Bible. However, additionally to the translation of the bible, SIL helped governments to incorporate indigenous communities.** (López and Sichra, 2008, p. 296, cited in Mair, 2013, p.34)

**The evangelic Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) was the first institute to introduce bilingual education, however, the goal was not the promotion of indigenous languages and the prevention of the extinction of these languages, the main aim was rather the evangelisation of the indigenous population. The first programmes were carried out in Mexico and Guatemala**

**in the 1930s, later bilingual schools were established in Ecuador and Peru in the 1940s and in Bolivia in 1995.** (López and Küper, 1999 cited in Mair, 2013, p. 34)

This chapter gave an overview of the history of intercultural bilingual education in Mexico. The next part concentrates on the different programmes related to bilingual intercultural education in Mexico before moving on to the schools and the intercultural universities.

### 5.2.1. General Coordination for Bilingual Intercultural Education

The General Coordination for Bilingual Intercultural Education in Mexico (*CGEIB – Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*) was created in 2000 as part of the Ministry for Education with faculties in basic, medium and higher education. Thus, two currents in intercultural education arise: the Bilingual Intercultural Education and the Intercultural Education for all Mexicans. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

**Surgen así dos corrientes en la educación intercultural: la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe y la Educación Intercultural para todos los mexicanos.**  
(Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

Some of the various goals of these education models include the recognition of indigenous languages and the recuperation of different forms of education. There have been projects that focus on the distribution of indigenous languages as a form of integration of these ethnic groups into Mexican society. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

### 5.3. Purpose and Goals of Bilingual Intercultural Education

López and Küper (1999) already stated that the main goal of these programmes was the evangelisation of the indigenous population. Hornberger and Molina (2004) also explain that the main objective was to prepare indigenous students for monolingual schools.

**Hornberger and Molina (2004) also state that in the beginning the only goal of these programmes was to prepare indigenous students for monolingual secondary and higher education. (Hornberger and Molina, 2004, cited in Mair, 2013, p. 34)**

Hornberger and Molina (2004) mention that this was the case in 'the beginning', however the conversations carried out at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo show that this is still the case nowadays. A graduate from the Universidad Intercultural Maya and now Maya teacher at the university spoke about his experience teaching at a small school in a community. He explained that the classes are usually in Maya because the children do not know Spanish. He taught Maths giving explanations in Maya. The pupils did not know how to read in Spanish, therefore he taught them how to read in Spanish.

**[...] los clases suelen ser en maya. Los estudiantes allí no saben español, yo doy matemáticas así, pues en números, pero yo explicando en maya. Tampoco saben muy bien leer en español, yo les enseña leer en español. [...]** (Tsikbal, Hilario, 02.12.13)

When Hilario, the Mayan teacher at the UIMQRoo, was asked if the children were taught to read and write in Maya the answer was no. He explained that there is no subject called Maya. There are Maya courses for the teachers to prepare them for their work in the communities, but these Maya classes are not in place for them to later teach Maya to the pupils.

**No, no hay una asignatura que se llama maya. De hecho en CONAFE, hubo los cursos de preparación, de los cursos previos, dan sesiones de maya a los instructores, pero que vayan preparando para la comunidad, no es para la gente enseñe maya. (Tsikbal, Hilario, 02.12.2013)**

This shows that Maya is used as an instruction language because the pupils in many communities do not know Spanish. However, they are not taught how to read and write in

their mother tongue.

When asked whether this should change, he explained that it would be good to have a bilingual system.

**Yo, pues antes no lo tenía en mente, pero ahora con toda esto, enseñando maya ahora, yo sí creo que es una buena opción, hacerlo bilingüe. Sí porque como le digo, usamos el idioma para instrucción, pero para leer en español y todo y como que está bien los dos, pero ser bilingüe, y no solo usar el español para castellanizar.** (Tsikbal, Hilario, 02.12.2013)

Another Maya teacher from the university explained that there are pupils whose mother tongue is Maya, so the teachers teach in Maya. Maya has to be used as an instruction language to assure the pupils can understand the class.

**Hay niños hablantes de la lengua maya. Enseñas en maya, porque su lengua materna es maya. Para que tu puedas enseñarles tiene que ser en la lengua maya para que puedan entender, sí como medio de instrucción, medio de enseñanza y aprendizaje.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

Maestra Florinda used to use illustrations to teach the pupils to read and write. She remembers that she had to teach the pupils the letter 'A' and used a picture to do this.

**Si por ejemplo a los niños para enseñarles, para alfabetizar a los niños que hablan maya vamos a llamarlo así hablar maya que haces tú, yo me acuerdo que usé una ilustración, por ejemplo yo tenía que enseñarlo el vocal a.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

In order to teach them the first letter of the alphabet she put up a picture of a tortoise, because in Maya it is called *a'ak*. She asked the children to repeat *a'ak*. They knew this animal and then she asked them whether they knew where tortoises lived, what they ate



and so on. All this interaction was in Maya because it was the language the pupils knew.

**Puse una ilustración de la tortuga, tortuga es a'ak - dice a'ak. [...] Si conocían este animalito y también este me dijeron que sí, que se llama a'ak, porque ellos hablaban solamente maya no sabían español. Después les digo, bueno, saben ustedes lo que come? [repite la cuestión en maya] Saben dónde vive? Toda la interacción era en lengua maya, porque era la lengua que traía.**  
(Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

Furthermore, she explained that the problem in some communities was that the teachers only spoke Spanish at school. The pupils could not follow the class because they could not understand the instructions in Spanish. Now there are efforts to at least revitalise and maintain the education in Maya, because the Maya language is slowly becoming extinct.

**Ahorita estamos tratando por lo menos de revitalizar de mantener de enseñar la lengua maya. Porque se está perdiendo la lengua maya.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

Many people from Maya-speaking communities continue to speak in Maya, however, they do not know how to read or write in Maya. In the indigenous schools, the pupils are not taught how to write in Maya.

**Nosotros hablamos todos maya, pero yo no sé escribir, cual es la estructura gramatical de la lengua maya, no lo sabemos. [...] En la educación indígena, no se les enseña el escrito.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

So as already mentioned, Maya is used as an instruction tool for communication. Florinda underlines this once more.

**Sobre todo la lengua maya lo utilizan como medio digamos de instrucción. De comunicación.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

A further obstacle for the bilingual intercultural education is that many parents do not want their children to be taught in Maya as Florinda explains.

**[...] ellos no quieren que enseñes maya a sus hijos.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

This illustrates that there are still communities in which the population only speaks Maya. So the teachers have to use Maya at school. However, Maya is only used for the purpose of giving the children instructions. They do not learn to read, write or do maths in this language. The Maya language is used as an instrument to teach the pupils to read and write in Spanish. As soon as the children can understand, read and write in Spanish the instruction language changes to Spanish. Some schools use Maya in the beginning because this is the only way to communicate with the pupils. However, later on in education this language is dropped, no Maya is spoken in class and there is no subject taught at school that is called the Maya language. This shows that there is no real bilingual intercultural education and that the programmes that prepare indigenous students for monolingual secondary and higher education still continue.

#### 5.4. Effectiveness of Bilingual Education

The effectiveness of bilingual education has been discussed in different works.

**Modiano (1974) writes about the better results that indigenous children in a bilingual programme obtained. 'One of the earliest research projects took place in Chiapas, where indigenous children in a bilingual program obtained better scores than their peers in L2 tests in the second grade.'** (López and Sichra, 2008, p. 297, cited in Mair 2013, p. 35)

The head of the department for further education (*Dirección de Educación Media Superior*) in Merida explained that students in bilingual programmes obtained better scores. In the case

of the *bachillerato* classes, the main criterion for the selection of teachers is that they are Maya-speakers.

**En el caso de las clases de bachillerato que se dan una de las características que traemos nosotros es que se van, nosotros hacemos una selección de los maestros con un primer registrim, que son mayahablantes. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

Unfortunately, one of the main problems is that the youngest generation is losing the capacity to speak Maya. Therefore, the college classes are in Maya and Spanish in order for the Maya-speaking students to be able to understand the class and so the rest of the students who do not understand Maya get used to listening to their own language again. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**Desafortunadamente, una de las problemas que trae la cultura y específicamente la lengua es que las generaciones más jóvenes van perdiendo la capacidad de hablar maya. Entonces lo que decimos era uno las clases, aunque los estudiantes la mayoría no son mayahablantes, nuestras clases están en maya y español, para que los estudiantes que son mayahablantes que no entienden y para los que no lo entienden van acostumbando a volver a escuchar su propia lengua. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

According to the head of the department one of the characteristics of Maya is that Maya-speakers do not make literal translations of what is said in Spanish. The world is seen in a different way, from the perspective of the Maya language. The teachers do not translate literally what is said in Spanish, they explain it from the view of their own "cosmovision", they explain it in Maya. In Yucatán this kind of development has been very successful and the students have achieved better results in standardised exams, no matter if the exams are in Spanish or Maya. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**Una de las características que el maya trae es que el maya no hace, el**

**mayahablante no hace una traducción literal lo que se dice en español. Se ve de manera diferente el mundo, desde el lenguaje maya. Nuestros maestros no hacen una traducción literal de lo que es en español. [...] lo explican desde su propia cosmovision, lo explican en maya. Y es lo que nosotros aquí en Yucatan describimos que tiene mucho éxito. Nuestros estudiantes que tienen este tipo de desarrollo, tipo de ambiente, tienen un mejor desempeño en exámenes estandarizados. Independientemente, si los exámenes estandarizados sean en maya o español. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

They do not know what the exam results would be like if the classes were just in Maya. It is clear that the results for monolingual Spanish classes are low. The results for Maya and Spanish were high, twice as high as expected. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**No sabemos si solamente teniéndole en maya cual sería el impacto. Lo que sí sabemos es que en español el resultado era bajo. En maya y español alto. Es el doble de lo que se espera. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

**According to Baker (2006) there are four different levels of effectiveness of bilingual education: at the level of the individual child, at the classroom level, at the school level, at the level of programmes or geographical regions. There are various effects, such as home and parents, community, teachers, school and society that make bilingual education successful. All these factors play an important role when it comes to effective bilingual education. (Baker, 2006, p. 260-262, cited in Mair, 2013, p. 35)**

Some students from the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)* speak Maya at home and with their parents. Although many people from the community in José Maria Morelos speak Maya, the community cannot be seen as bilingual or Maya-speaking community because the main economic activity is in Spanish. The signs put up within the community are in Spanish, when you want to open a bank account this has to be in Spanish, etc. Although many teachers know Maya, they usually speak Spanish in the classroom. Some teachers might teach the children some words in Maya, however, there is

no subject called Maya language at school, only at university. All these factors are important when implementing a successful bilingual education, so they all have to be taken into consideration. An effective bilingual education cannot be achieved only on a school level, the whole society and surrounding has to be included and integrated in this kind of transition towards a bilingual education.

**In order for bilingual education to be successful and effective, teacher training and continuous professional development of the staff is needed. A bilingual school or classroom cannot exist without teachers trained for these schools. If the teachers are well trained the effectiveness of bilingual schools can be enhanced.** (Baker, 2006, p. 317, cited in Mair, 2013, p. 35)

José Maria Morelos and the surrounding areas have the ideal preconditions in order for bilingual education to become successful and effective. Teachers are trained at the *UIMQRoo* and these graduates could work at bilingual schools in the future.

**Public discussions about bilingual education often start with the idea that this kind of education causes complications and difficulties. Speaking a minority language is often related to the problem of poverty and also with underachievement in school, minimal social and vocational mobility and with lack of integration into the majority culture. Many see minority languages as obstacles and think if the persons spoke the majority language these obstacles would disappear. However, evidence shows that strong forms of bilingual education do not create a language problem but rather lead to higher achievements.** (Baker, 2006, p. 382-286, cited in Mair, 2013, p. 36)

This part of chapter five was an overview of the effectiveness of bilingual education discussed in different works. The next part focuses on Bilingual Intercultural Education in Mexico.

## 5.5. Bilingual Intercultural Education in Mexico – a myth?

This chapter illustrates and discusses the results of the questionnaires and conversations carried out at the UIMQRoo and other parts of Mexico. The main question of this chapter is whether there is a true bilingual intercultural education in Mexico? A further question is whether a society in which all participants are included can exist in the future. Is the bilingual intercultural educational model accepted in society? All these questions are discussed and analysed in this chapter.

Jansenson and Sada (n.d.) write that the intercultural focus converts itself into an indispensable element for the educational activity of a country with such cultural diversity. The multiplication of coexisting spaces and the reduction of distance between citizens require an education towards respect and co-existence. In Mexico the relations between the dominant language and minority languages, which are the native languages of the country, are characterised by prejudices and clear discriminations rooted in history. The consequences is that when speaking about intercultural education, we are not compromised to combatting these prejudices in a direct way and to constructing new bases for the interrelation between individuals of society. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d. p. 434)

In a conversation with one of the professors at the UIMQRoo he explained that bilingual education is a cheat. For example if you have a bilingual education at a German school or a French-Mexican or other bilingual school – Spanish, English, French, German, etc., then the development is progressive. On the other hand, when you speak of bilingual education with Maya or another indigenous language, the student learns Spanish, because there is no literature for teaching physics, chemistry, etc. in Maya. Everything is taught in Spanish, Maya is just taught as something folkloric to tell stories, jokes or speak about culture, about nature, animals, but everything is written in Spanish. When you are in the Maya zone and you go to the hospital, everything is in Spanish. For example if you go to the bank to open an account, everything is in Spanish. In reality, there is no development in this aspect. It is also difficult to reach a standardisation of the Maya language, it is a difficult task and some colleagues have been working on this for years. This year the first student wrote her thesis in Maya. (cf. Tsikbal, Abel, 26.11.2013)

**La educación bilingüe aquí es una trampa. Es una trampa porque por ejemplo cuando tu tienes una educación bilingüe en el colegio alemán o en franco-mexicano o una escuela bilingüe en español, en inglés, francés, en alemán, el desarrollo va en progresiva contrario cuando se habla de una educación bilingüe en maya o una lengua indígena el chico aprende español, lojaba precisamente no se cuenta con la literatura, para dar clase de física, química, todo se da en español, el maya se enseñan como un, no sé como folclórico, para contar faunas, cuentos, chistes, campo, algo que si es culturalmente, naturaleza, animales, pero por otro lado catalán español, se escribe en catalán. Tu estas en la zona maya, vas a al hospital y está en español, vas al banco a abrir una cuenta, es en español, en la realidad no hay un desarrollo en este aspecto. Escrito todavía de la lengua maya, porque es difícil también, primero llegar a una estandarización y es la tarea difícil de mis compañeros de la lengua maya, pasaron años trabajando en ya salió este año, la primera egresada que escribió su tesis en maya. (Tsikbal, Abel, 26.11.13)**

The teachers at the protest camp were asked whether there is an intercultural bilingual education in their state Veracruz. They explained that there are bilingual regions in Veracruz where teachers dedicate themselves to educate the children in their indigenous language. The teacher from Veracruz is in favour of working on this education in the indigenous regions. The native language, in their case Nahuatl, should be included in the education of the children at home and at school. This is very important, even before speaking English. The government wants the schools to teach English. But very often the persons in these regions do not even know Spanish and are forgetting their native language Nahuatl. The teacher from Veracruz says that we have to sow, harvest and cultivate this language, these roots. (cf. Tsikbal, Teachers from Veracruz, 30.09.2013)

**Yo creo que tenemos que sembrar, cosechar y cultivar esta lengua que tenemos, estos raíces. (Tsikbal, Teachers from Veracruz, 30.09.2013)**

This chapter included the definition and history of bilingual intercultural education. Furthermore, the General Coordination for Intercultural Bilingual Education (CGEIB) was introduced. This chapter discussed the purpose, goals and effectiveness of bilingual intercultural education and finally analysed whether it is a myth by including the results of the conversations carried out in Mexico. The following chapter is about education in Mexico from preschool to university.



## 6. Education in Mexico from Preschool to University

This chapter takes a closer look at education in Mexico from preschool to university. This chapter shows which languages are taught at school and whether interculturality exists in the different educational programmes. First of all, the education reform in Mexico is discussed. Then this chapter mainly focuses on the results of the questionnaire and *tskibal* carried out at the UIMQRoo – the results are presented, analysed and discussed. Then the *Bachillerato Intercultural*, an intercultural model for further education, is introduced. One part of this chapter focuses on the teacher training system at the National Council for Educational Development (CONAFE – *Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo*). The last part focuses on intercultural universities in general in Mexico and the UIMQRoo in more detail.

### 6.1. Educational Reform in Mexico

The size and diversity of Mexico City makes an incredible impression on tourist. Many visitors are so distracted on the metro, as there is so much to see – people selling the most peculiar things, playing instruments and holding talks. In September 2013 there were widespread protests on the streets of Mexico City and on the main plaza *El Zócalo* there was a protest camp set up by the teachers protesting against the educational reform.

The author of this diploma thesis arrived in Mexico City on the 13 September 2013. One day later, BBC reported that 'Mexico teachers clash with police in Zocalo Square' (cf. BBC News, 14.09.2013)

**Striking teachers had been camped out there [Zocalo] for weeks. [...] The teachers have been demanding changes to education reforms approved by President Enrique Peña Nieto. The authorities said they wanted to clear the Zocalo for the Independence Day celebrations at the weekend. [...] The educations reforms introduced by the government include performance-related tests for teachers. Critics accuse Mexico's teachers' unions of being corrupt and having too much control over job allocation. [...] CNTE [The National Education Workers' Co-ordinator] union members argue that the**

**compulsory tests are a way for the government to sack teachers en masse. They also say that the tests will not take into account the difficult conditions teachers in the poorest regions of Mexico have to work under. [...] The government has argued that union control over teaching jobs has contributed to corruption, which has seen poorly trained teachers promoted over more qualified colleagues. (BBC News, 14.09.2013)**

The Independence Day Celebrations of 15 September were then carried out in the *Zocalo*; however, it did not stop the teachers from rebuilding their protest camps. It was difficult to find information about the opinion of teachers themselves, the newspapers and television mainly reported about the protestors and the negative aspects of the demonstrations without giving them a chance to speak about their point of view. Therefore, the decision was made to visit the protest camp and interview teachers.

Two teachers from Veracruz explained the principal cause of the protest camp – the education reform, because in reality it is a disguised labour reform. (cf. Tskibal, Teacher from Veracruz, 30.09.2013)

**La causa principal es la reforma de educación disfrazada, porque en realidad es una reforma laboral. (Tskibal, Teacher from Veracruz, 30.09.2013)**

Furthermore, the teacher from Veracruz explained that the real cause of the protest are not being spread in the media in Mexico, many things are being hidden and disguised. The demands of the teachers are not being published in the newspapers. The teachers are fighting for a public education, an education that is for free and which reaches the poorest, the most humble persons, who are often forgotten and do not have the resources to enter a private education. Step by step education is being privatized. This education reform affects all citizens. (cf. Tskibal, Teacher from Veracruz, 30.09.2013)

**Estamos luchando por una educación pública, una educación gratuita que llega a los más pobres, la gente más humilde, olvidada, que no tienen**

**recursos para ingresar a una educación privada. Poco a poco se va a privatizar.**

**La reforma afecta a la ciudadanía.** (Tskibal, Teacher from Veracruz, 30.09.2013)

According to the website of the Mexican Government the constitutional reform regarding education includes the task that the state should guarantee quality and equality. The important role of the teachers in education is included in the reform. The federal executive branch in coordination with the local education authorities determines the teaching plans and programmes, with the participation of teachers and parents. In order for the students to learn more and in a better way, professional teacher service is established in the constitution. Training for and evaluation of teachers, directors, supervisors and installations are included in the reform. A national educational evaluation system is created. This will lead to new guidelines. Furthermore, this helps teachers develop strength and overcome weakness. The quality of teachers, directors and supervisors, installations, plans, programmes, methods and educational material are evaluated. A census will take place to find out how many schools, teachers and students there are in Mexico and with this information an educational information and administration system is created. The reform established that there is direct communication between the director of the schools and authorities. There will be more full-time schools, which cover between six and eight hours daily, in order to push academics and cultural development and development in the area of sports for the students. Selling food that is not favourable for the health of the students is prohibited. Nutritious food is provided for the students of schools in areas with a high poverty index and those marginalised. There should be no privileges due to race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. The reform establishes autonomous school administrations. The directors and the parents have the possibility to make decisions for the purpose of improving the installations and will be provided with the necessary resources needed to do this. The reform establishes a national educational system, improved co-existence, respect for cultural diversity and family integrity. Furthermore it is in the general interest and leads to a Mexico with a qualitative education. (cf. Government of Mexico, n.d.)

This chapter was about the educational reform. It included the first impressions of the protests and the difficulties faced with regarding the collection of information for this work.

The situation and protests in Mexico were explained and the interviews and conversations about the educational reform were analysed and discussed.

In the next part of this diploma thesis, the results of the questionnaire and the tsikbal are illustrated, analysed and discussed.

## 6.2. Education in Mexico – Results of Questionnaire and Tsikbal

This chapter focuses on an example of a kindergarten in José Maria Morelos and the results of the questionnaire and conversations carried out during the research work for this diploma thesis.

A visit to the preschool Jardín de Niños, Sebastian Lerdo de Tejado in José Maria Morelos, Quintana Roo allowed to find out whether the children were being taught in a bilingual way. The director of the preschool explained that all teachers (five teachers in total) spoke Maya. During the first visit to the school, the director showed some of the learning material they use to teach the children some words in Maya. During the second visit one of the classes was observed. The teacher Magdaleno explained to the children in Spanish that they were going to have a bilingual lesson that day. So then he started the class with a song in Maya. All the children participated and sang along, for some it seemed easier to sing along and for some it seemed more difficult to pronounce the words in Maya. Afterwards they sang another song, but in Spanish. The teacher then moved on to teaching the children words in Maya and later in Spanish.

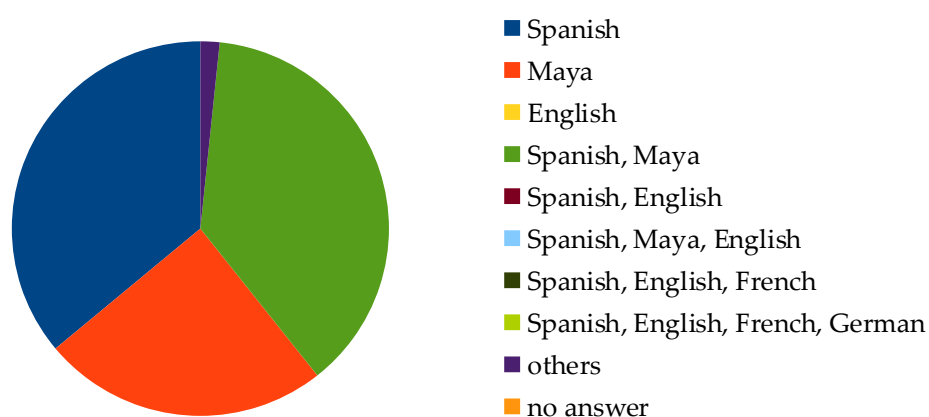


*Image 1: Kindergarten, Quintana Roo (2013)*

This part showed an example of a kindergarten in José Maria Morelos. The observations made clear that teachers of this preschool all speak Maya; however the classes are mainly taught in Spanish. Although the children learn some words in Maya, it is no true bilingual education.

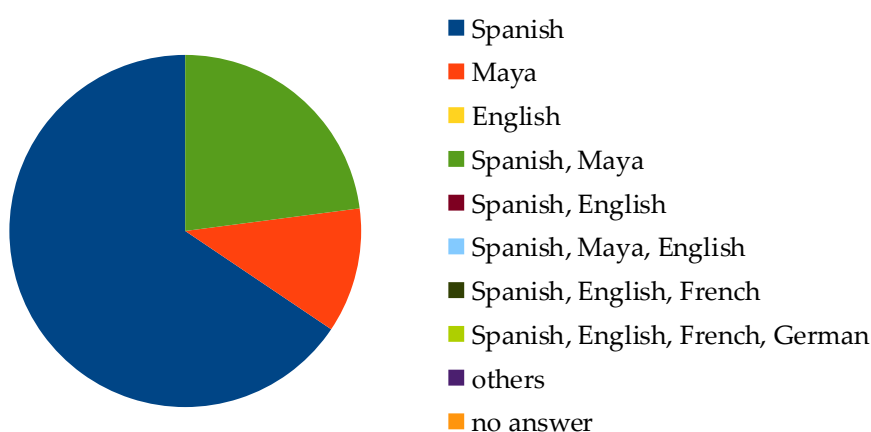
The questionnaire carried out at the *UIMQRoo* shows how many students were taught Maya, Spanish or further languages at home and at school.

This first chart shows that 22 students speak only Spanish with their grandparents, 15 speak only Maya with them and 23 speak Spanish and Maya with their grandparents. One student speaks a different language with his or her grandparents.



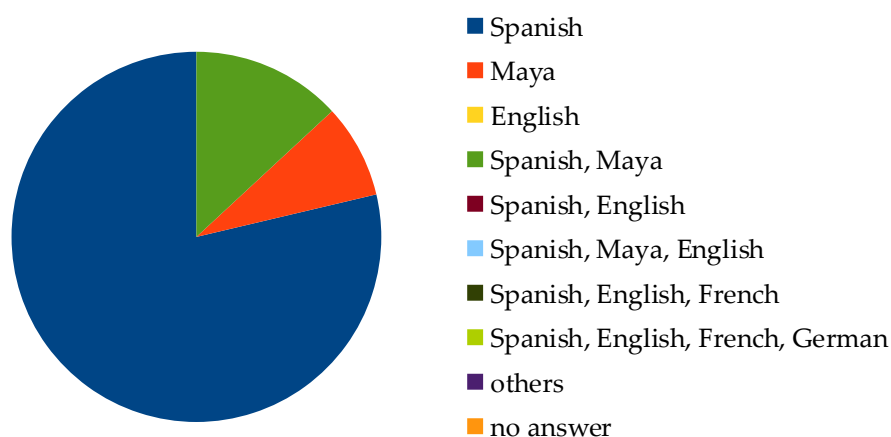
*Chart 1: Languages spoken with grandparents*

The second chart shows the languages which the students speak with their parents. 40 students stated that they speak Spanish with their parents, 7 speak Maya and 14 Spanish and Maya.



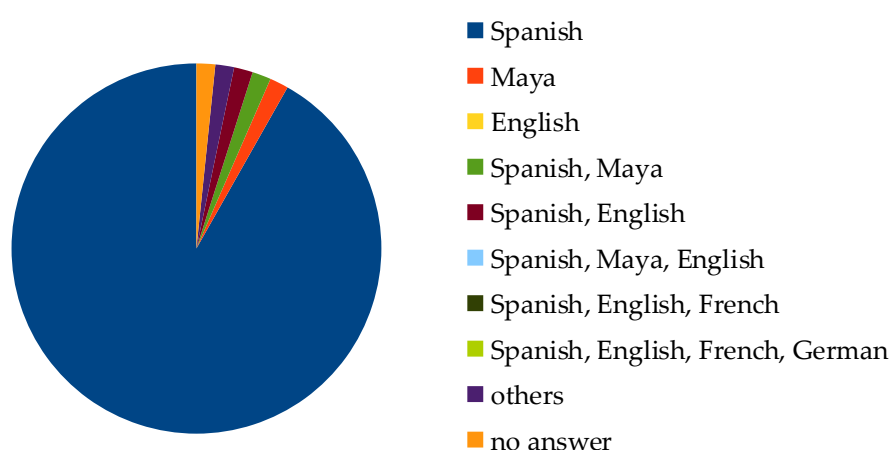
*Chart 2: Languages spoken with parents*

Chart number three shows the languages the students speak with their siblings. 48 out of the 61 students stated that they speak only Spanish with their siblings. One student speaks only Maya with his or her siblings. One person speaks Spanish and Maya with his or her siblings and one student Spanish and English.



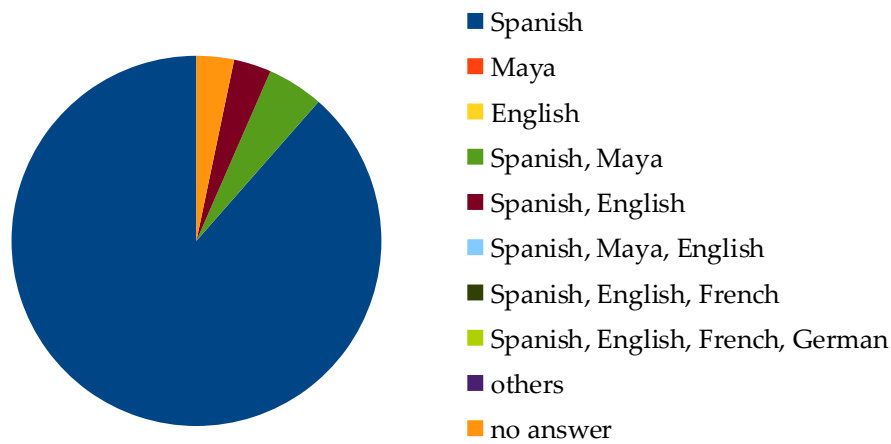
*Chart 3: Languages spoken with siblings*

The fourth chart shows the languages taught at preschool. 56 students stated that they only were taught in Spanish. One student was taught in Maya, one in Spanish and Maya and one learned Spanish and English. One student stated that he or she learned a different language and one student gave no answer. This graph shows clearly that hardly any students enjoyed a bilingual intercultural education at preschool. The result of the questionnaire is that Spanish is the dominant language at preschool.



*Chart 4: Languages taught at preschool*

Chart number five shows the languages taught at primary school. Here we can observe a slightly higher number of students who learned Spanish and Maya at school. 54 students learned just Spanish at primary school, 3 Spanish and Maya, 2 Spanish and English. Two students gave no answer.



*Chart 5: Languages taught at primary school*

This chart shows the languages taught at secondary school. 22 students stated that they only learned Spanish. One student stated that he or she learned only English. 37 students learned Spanish and English, one student learned Spanish, English and French. This chart shows that no students learned Maya at secondary school.



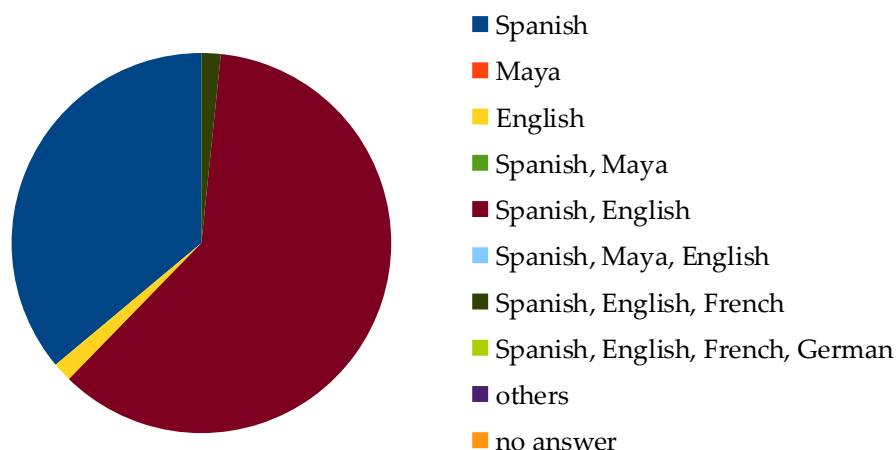


Chart 6: Languages taught at secondary school

The last chart shows the languages the students learned at college (bachillerato, preparatory etc.). 19 students stated that they learned only Spanish, one student stated that she only learned English. 36 students were taught Spanish and English. One Spanish, Maya and English. Three learned Spanish, English and French at college. And one student learned Spanish, English, French and German.

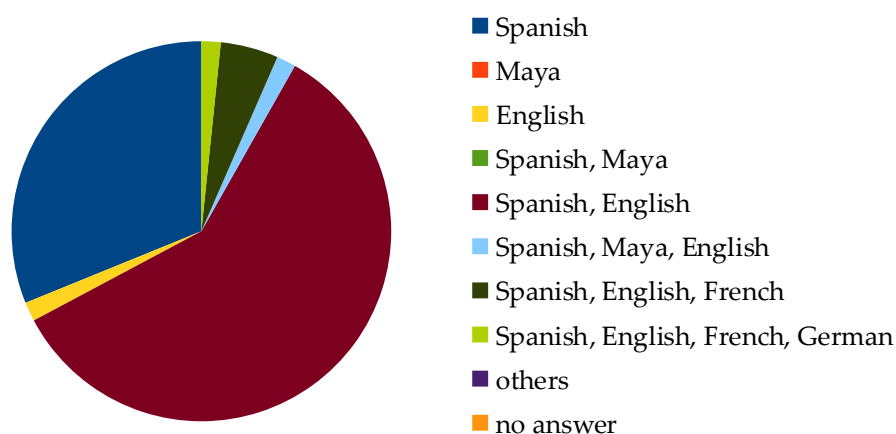


Chart 7: Languages taught at college

Additionally to these charts there is a table with the results of the questionnaire carried out at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)* in 2013.

Language	Grandparents	Parents	Siblings	Preschool	Primary	Secondary	College
ES	22	40	48	56	54	22	19
MA	15	7	5	1			
EN						1	1
ES, MA	23	14	8	1	3		
ES, EN				1	2	37	36
ES, MA, EN							1
ES, MA, FR						1	3
ES, EN, FR, DE							1
Others	1			1			
No answer				1	2		

ES = Spanish, MA = Maya, EN = English, FR = French, DE = German

*Table 4: Questionnaire UIMQRoo*

These findings show that few students learned Maya at school. 15 students speak Maya with their grandparents. Seven speak Maya with their parents. Five speak Maya with their siblings. One student learned Maya at preschool. No students learned Maya at primary school. No students learned Maya at secondary school. No students learned Maya at college.

The questionnaire also looks the bilingual education and shows how many students learned Spanish and Maya at home and at school. 23 students speak Spanish and Maya with their grandparents. 14 students speak Spanish and Maya with their parents. Eight students speak Spanish and Maya with their siblings. One student learned Spanish and Maya at preschool, three at primary school. No student learned Spanish and Maya at secondary school or at college.

Many students at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo explained that they had to begin at zero because they had not been taught Maya before. For example, a student explains that she learnt Maya when she entered university. Only then. Because before she just spoke some words with her family, just basic things, like let's eat, let's go to sleep. At university she then learnt how to write, but before that nothing, nothing at all. (cf. Tsikbal, Jennifer, 26.09.2013)

**Yo apenas aprendo maya cuando entré en la universidad. Apenas me lo toco. Porque antes es de con mi familia hablamos palabritas, pero fue así nada mas básico, vamos a comer, vamos a dormir [...] y apenas aquí conozco así bien, como se escribe [...] pero antes no, para nada, nada.** (Tsikbal, Jennifer, 26.09.2013)

She also explains that English was taught at secondary school. So Maya is very difficult for her now. But she knows a little bit of grammar, however, she cannot reproduce it.

**[...] inglés enseñaron desde la secundaria. Entonces el maya me hace muy difícil ahora. Pero sí conozco digamos un poco de gramática, pero no lo puedo reproducir.** (Tsikbal, Jennifer, 26.09.2013)

The first tsikbal was with a student of language and culture at the UIMQRoo. The author of this work was sitting at university collecting ideas and writing them down when the student came over. After telling the student about the research work and the studies in Innsbruck, she started talking more about herself. The author felt that they got on well from the first minute onwards and that was a great step towards developing confidence and trust for the tsikbal and further conversations about education and interculturality.

The student explained that she was not from the community where the university is. Her parents do not speak Maya and at home they speak Spanish. For her it is difficult to learn Maya, English seems a little bit easier. The students who know Maya can hold workshops

in Maya for the students who do not speak Maya very well. There are different levels of Maya. She is in Level II. In this community many speak Maya, 80%. There is also a course called "Second Language in the context of Interculturality". In this course the students learn how to teach a second language.

**No soy de esta comunidad, mis papas no hablan maya, en casa hablamos español. Es difícil para mí aprender maya, inglés me parece un poco más fácil. Los estudiantes que saben maya pueden dar talleres de maya para los estudiantes que no lo saben muy bien. Hay diferentes niveles de maya. Yo estoy en el nivel III. En esta comunidad muchos hablan maya, ochenta por ciento. También hay un curso que se llama enseñanza de la segunda lengua en entorno de interculturalidad. En este curso aprendemos como enseñar una segunda lengua. (Tsikbal, Jennifer, 19.09.2013)**

The second student spoke English very well. The conversation was in English. The student then spoke more about his childhood and his future plans. It was just like an everyday conversation but with important information about education and interculturality for this work.

He explained that he learnt Spanish when he was six years old. Before that he only spoke Maya, his parents spoke in Maya with him. He has three brothers and two sisters, all speak Maya. For him it was difficult when he started primary school, because his professor only spoke Spanish and not Maya. The student did not speak Spanish, only Maya. He learnt Spanish at school. Maya was not taught at primary or secondary school. The student learnt to write in Maya when he started university. He learnt to write in Maya very fast. For many students it is difficult to follow the Maya class, but for him it is easy. After his studies he wants to continue, he wants to do a master study in the United States. He would like to be an English teacher. At the moment he is filling out an application for an internship in Canada for 3 months. If he is chosen he can work in Canada as an assistant. He likes speaking English, but when he wants to practice with other students they answer in Spanish. (cf. Tsikbal, Moises, 19.09.2013)

**Yo aprendí español cuando tenía 6 años. Antes solo hablaba maya, mis papas me hablaron en maya. Tengo 3 hermanos y 2 hermanas, todos hablan maya. Para mi fue muy difícil cuando entré a la primaria, porque mi profesor solo hablaba español y no hablaba maya. Yo no hablaba español, sino maya. Aprendí español en la escuela. No enseñaron maya en la primaria o secundaria. Aprendí escribir en maya cuando entré a la universidad. Aprendí escribir maya muy rápido. Para muchos estudiantes es difícil la clase de maya, pero para mí no es difícil. [...] Después de terminar mi licenciatura quiero ir a los Estados Unidos para hacer una maestría. Me gustaría ser profesor de inglés. Ahora estoy llenando una aplicación para unas prácticas en Canadá para 3 meses, si me eligen puedo ir a Canadá como asistente. A mí me gusta mucho hablar inglés, pero cuando quiero practicar con otros estudiantes me responden en español. [...] (Tsikbal, Moises, 19.09.2013)**

One of the students explained that her parents were teachers and that she had to speak in Maya to the other children at school because they only spoke Maya. Although her parents knew Maya, they did not speak Maya to her.

You start school at seven in Mexico. The student was only just six years old and not allowed to start primary school yet. As her parents were teachers, here father took her to the primary school where he was teaching. It was a bilingual school. Her parents always spoke Maya, but only to each other. When the student went to that school the children only spoke Maya, so she had to communicate with them in Maya, she learnt a little bit of Maya that year. However, when she started primary school at her village she forgot everything again – until she then started studying at the UIMQRoo. (cf. Tsikbal, Guadalupe, 25.09.2013)

**Se entra a la primaria con siete años aquí en México. Yo apenas tenía 6 años y no me dejaban entrar a la primaria. Como mis papas son maestros, mi papá me llevó a la primaria donde enseña él. Era una escuela bilingüe. Mis papas hablaban maya, pero solo entre ellos. Cuando fui a esta escuela los niños solo hablaban maya, así tuve que comunicar con ellos en maya, aprendí un poco**

**de maya en este año, pero cuando fui a la primaria en mi pueblo olvidé todo.**

**Hasta que entró a la UIMQRoo.** (Tsikbal, Guadalupe, 25.09.2013)

Dr. Castillo Cocom spoke about a student (Anna<sup>4</sup>) who had recently graduated from the UIMQRoo. She had written her thesis with Dr. Castillo Cocom. At first the author had e-mail contact with Anna and also spoke to her over the phone. In November the author of this work and the student finally had the chance to meet personally.

Today [14 November 2013] there were different workshops at the UIMQRoo about intercultural community health. It is 9 pm and a lot of students are still at the university playing music and singing. Anna comes up to the author and sits down at the table on the first floor of the building. Trust is built up quickly and they start to talk. The author speaks a little bit about the research work and asks Anna about her thesis and what she is doing at the moment. She explains that it is a little bit complicated with her thesis, she has finished it off but still has to hand it in. After her studies she worked in a hostel, but she did not like it and left after three weeks. Now she is living in the village where her family lives. She came to the university last week to meet Dr. Castillo Cocom and another professor. The professor told her about the health workshops and so she stayed to take photographs of the workshops. There were different workshops and tomorrow they are travelling to Bacalar. Anna studied language and culture. She is a Maya-speaker. Her parents do not speak Spanish; at home they only speak Maya. When she started school, she started to learn Spanish. They did not teach Maya at primary or secondary school. She learnt it at home. Afterwards when she was working in CONAFE she learnt to read and write in Maya. In her class at the UIMQRoo there were about five students who were not Maya-speakers, the rest of the class spoke Maya. They spoke Maya to each other in class, but many professors spoke Spanish to them. Anna explained a very nice concept – the concept of ‘Abuelo Maya’ (Maya Grandparents). The Maya-speaking students take the other students to the home of their Maya-speaking grandparents to practice the language. (cf. Tsikbal, Anna, 14.11.2013)

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4        The students’ names in this paper are all fictitious to protect the anonymity of the persons.

This chapter analysed the situation of Maya taught at preschool, primary and secondary schools in Quintana Roo, Mexico. The results of the observation of classes, interviews and questionnaires show that there is no true bilingual education. Many students speak Maya at home, but Maya is not taught as a first language at school.

Anna explained during the tsikbal that she worked at CONAFE – the National Council for Educational Development and a very important instrument in rural education in Mexico.

### 6.3. Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo (CONAFE)

CONAFE (*Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo*) is the National Council for Educational Development. CONAFE is an institution responsible for the primary and secondary education in areas which no one else reaches. In other words, in Mexico there are the states, municipalities, commissaries and haciendas. So CONAFE works in the haciendas, often with a population of around 250 to 300 students, very small. These schools are from CONAFE.

**CONAFE es el Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo. El CONAFE es una instancia que se encarga de dar clases de primaria y secundaria en lugares donde nadie llega. Osea están los estados, los municipios, de los municipios hay comisarias y de comisarias hay haciendas. Entonces donde llega CONAFE es de haciendas, son poblaciones a veces de 250 a 300 estudiantes, muy pequeñas. Esos son de CONAFE. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

There are rural schools where Maya is spoken. There are schools that are very small and are not called schools; they are from the National Council for Educational Development. Everyone is Maya, and the pupils speak Maya, and the teachers are usually from the community. They finished their preparatory school and do not have money to pay their higher education, so CONAFE gives them a scholarship for two years if they teach at one of the schools for one year. So they work in primary schools in areas where no one else goes to and after that year they go on to higher education.

The person interviewed, for example, has friends who studied the first two years of their university education with the help of such a scholarship, when they run out of money, they go back to CONAFE, work in the communities and receive another scholarship. That is the way it works.

**Lo mismo que nosotros iniciamos en prepa ya están obligando en las escuelas, hay escuelas rurales donde se habla maya, hay escuelas que son muy pequeñas y no se llaman escuelas que son de CONAFE, allí todos son mayas, y hablan la maya los chavos, y es más los chavos normalmente son de la comunidad que ha estudiado su prepa y que no tienen dinero para pagar sus estudios, CONAFE dice tu me das clase un año y te doy dos años de estudios de lo que tu quieras. Entonces ellos trabajan dando clases de primaria, en comisarias, o a veces en haciendas, donde nadie llega y al año siguiente estudias su siguiente nivel. Yo por ejemplo tengo amigos que estudiaron sus primeros dos años de licenciatura, se quedan sin dinero, regresan a CONAFE un año estudios de otra, trabajan en comunidades y les dan otros dos años de beca. Es lo que, así lo hacen. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

CONAFE is a decentralized institution just like the UIMQRoo with resources from the state but with its own administration. CONAFE is in charge of teaching in the most remote areas of cities, the marginalised areas, areas in which there are not many children, or not many people go to school. So the community applies for CONAFE to send teachers to a community municipality and then CONAFE teaches in this community - from primary to secondary to preparatory school. (cf. Tsikbal, Hilario, 2.12.2013)

**Bueno, CONAFE es una institución descentralizada como la UIMQRoo con recursos del estado pero lo administran ellos mismo y lo que hace CONAFE es llevar educación dónde la, en las zonas más alejadas de las ciudades, de las zonas marginalizadas, en las que no tienen muchos niños, muchas personas que van a la escuela. Entonces la comunidad solicita a CONAFE que necesitan un instructor en un municipio comunitario y pues CONAFE lleva educación**



**allí a las comunidades. Desde primaria a secundaria, hasta preescolar.**

(Tsikbal, Hilario, 2.12.2013)

Hilario (2013) furthermore explained in the *tiskbal* how you can receive a scholarship from CONAFE. When he was working there in 2007 they accepted students who had finished their secondary education. You then have to apply to become a trainer at CONAFE. You take your documents, birth certificate, certificate to show that you have finished your secondary education and other necessary documents. Then there is an intensive training which goes on for one and a half months, a little bit of pedagogy, how to teach, programming, curriculum planning and within this one and a half months there is also a practice week at a school. So you go to the community where you are presented, you teach there for a week so the other trainers can see your potential. At the end of this week, there is a final list with the ones who passed the course. Those who do not pass the course can continue the training for a little longer. (cf. Tsikbal, Hilario, 2.12.2013)

So that is basically how CONAFE works. You enter a course, teach in your community, and after one year of teaching they give you a scholarship for 30 months, which equals three years of 800 Mexican pesos per month. If you want to study another year, you can work at CONAFE for two years and receive a scholarship for six years. (cf. Tsikbal, Hilario, 2.12.2013)

**Entonces, es lo que basicamente hace CONAFE. Entrás un curso, te asignan una comunidad, y terminas bien el año y te dan una beca de 30 meses, equivalente a 3 años de 800 pesos mensuales y pues si quieres hacer otro año, puedes hacer dos años te dan 6 años de beca. (Tsikbal, Hilario, 2.12.2013)**

Hilario (2013) recommends working with CONAFE, not just because of the scholarship but also because of the experience. You learn a great deal during one year of teaching at a school and then when you arrive at university, you are a lot more open-minded. If you start university straight after finishing school, you are not as open-minded and continue with the same habits from school.

**Yo lo recomiendo mucho, de hecho, hay personas que, no tanto por la beca sino más bien por el trabajo, se responsabiliza mucho desde aprendes, tienes experiencia en docencia y pues como llegas aquí a la universidad con una mente más abierta, con la creencia que terminando el bachillerato te vienes directo, te vienes un poco con tus mismos hábitos de bachiller. (Tsikbal, Hilario, 2.12.2013)**

This chapter explained CONAFE based on the conversations in Mérida and at the UIMQRoo. The conversations showed that CONAFE has implemented successful tools to help students from rural areas to study at university and at the same time collect work experience.

#### 6.4. Bachillerato Intercultural

This chapter focuses on the *bachillerato intercultural* – an intercultural preparatory school. It includes the results of the conversation with José Arturo Sánchez Baeza – the coordinator of open preparatory schools and the bachillerato intercultural in Mérida.

The most important criteria when choosing teachers is that they are Maya-speakers. The communities where these *bachilleratos interculturales* exist are communities where the majority are Maya-speakers but they are not of Maya origin. Unfortunately, one of the problems with this culture and especially the language is that the younger generations are losing the ability to speak Maya. Although the majority of the students are not Maya-speakers, the classes of the bachillerato intercultural are in Maya and Spanish. This gives the students the chance to understand the class and at the same time get used to listening to their own language again. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**Aunque los estudiantes la mayoría no son mayahablantes, nuestras clases están en maya y español, para que los estudiantes que son mayahablantes que no entienden y para los que no lo entienden van acostumbrando a volver**

**a escuchar su propia lengua.** (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

There are some communities where practically all are Maya-speakers and we do not have a problem – the classes are only in Maya. They come from schools where Spanish was spoken. Nine out of ten secondary school teachers from those schools only speak Spanish. They do not speak Maya. There is no course that is called ‘Maya language’ and they do not teach in Maya. The classes are in Spanish at the secondary schools. There are only few who speak Maya and if they do, they do not speak Maya in class, only outside class. So most of the students come from communities where only one language was taught – Spanish. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**Los maestros de educación secundaria de esas escuelas, de puedo decir de que de cada diez nueve solo hablan español. No hablan maya.** (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

However, at home they do speak Maya, in the villages they speak Maya. So it is interesting to see that in the village Maya is spoken, then they enter the classroom and speak Spanish – in the secondary schools. With the bachillerato intercultural the goal is to keep the language and promote the indigenous language again within the programme. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**Es bien curioso, estas viendo que en el pueblo hablan maya, entran al salón y hablan en español, en las clases de secundaria. Con nosotros no, con nosotros lo que intentamos es que se mantenga el lengua y que se promueva nuestra lengua dentro del programa.** (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

In order to show that Maya is very important, the programme substitutes English and teaches Maya instead. A Maya-speaking student has no possibility to certify that he speaks Maya. If you are looking for a job and you write on your CV that you speak Maya you cannot show a certificate. If you say you speak English, you often have to present certificates, for example the TOEFL. So the bachillerato intercultural focuses on certifying

the students. They are already bilingual, but this is often not recognised officially. So this is included in the study. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

There are areas where Maya is taught, because there is no other possibility. But we were practically the first ones to include Maya in our studies from the beginning onwards and there is a lot of work being done to include these courses in primary education. Now it still has to reach secondary education as well. There is a programme in secondary schools called 'Let's speak Maya'. But this is an additional programme in secondary school. The *bachillerato intercultural* is the first programme that includes Maya in the study plan, it is not an additional course, it is part of the whole study. (cf. Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

This chapter focused on the *bachillerato intercultural*. This leads us to higher education. The following chapter focuses on the intercultural universities.

## 6.5. Intercultural Universities

This chapter focuses on the intercultural universities in Mexico, with a special focus on the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* (UIMQRoo) where most of the interviews and information for this investigation and research work were collected.

Firstly, the universities and the educational model in general are introduced before moving on to the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* and finally analysing whether Maya is taught as an L1 or L2 at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*.

### 6.5.1. Intercultural University – Education Model

This chapter describes the intercultural universities and the educational model by focusing on the different existing universities, the history, current situation and future of this educational model.

The intercultural university sets out unique experiences of intercultural education in which the students of different ethnic and cultural ethnics meet and in which the intercultural focus is converted into a privileged source of learning together with an educational intention. The purpose is to prepare the indigenous youth and adults in order for them to be active agents of transformation of their surroundings through new education opportunities which link knowledge and experience with new development opportunities the current society offers. (cf. Muñoz y Villar, 2009, p. 21-22)

From this perspective, one of the priorities of the institutions is the necessity to remove elements which violate the essence of the native languages and cultures and promote the strengthening of oral and written bilingualism as a fundamental goal to keep the direct communication between the students and their communities alive, with the idea of promoting the revaluation and strengthening of these communities. Furthermore, the communities should be the beneficiaries of this development and advancement of knowledge of their own languages. (cf. Muñoz y Villar, 2009, p. 22)

The traditional perception of the indigenous population, which was inherited from the conquest, has not been erased. The perception of indigenous persons is still that of a sector with visible cultural disadvantages that have hindered the full recognition and integration in society. (cf. Muñoz y Villar, 2009, p. 29)

According to Muñoz and Villar (2009) the Creole intention that supported the extreme differentiation of social groups in the conflicts of the colonial time, was based on the dichotomy of superiority or inferiority of the distinction of race. This principle determined the situation of indigenous peoples as an inferior sector that should be subject to the Spanish power and confined in marginalisation and misery. Up until today, this scheme of social differentiation has divided the Mexican society regarding origin, the language commonly used and the identification with culturally specific practices and elements, depreciating the indigenous and privileging the values imposed by the Spanish culture and the derivatives of the process of miscegenation. (cf. Muñoz y Villar, 2009, p. 29-30)

In the organisation of the conventional universities the educational philosophy has been monopolised by the occident. The knowledge generated in them is supported in the epistemological European perspective that has excluded other knowledge. The universities organised under the classic scheme which emerged in the medieval time not only determined what and how was taught, but also how society should value the knowledge the university offered. Likewise, the educational model of the conventional universities is based on the ideologies and customs that accompanied the scheme of colonial domination that established normative rules, which generated the exclusion of those, who were considered as inferior. (cf. Muñoz y Villar, 2009, p. 37)

In this order of ideas, the beginnings of intercultural education should be brought forward: The recognition of the ancestral mode of knowledge build up in a collective way in a determined context. The transformation of the vision of the cultural hegemony, which was not capable of recognising or disqualified the processes of knowledge built up by other cultural perspectives, about the economic profit of knowledge. The recognition of the diversity of the indigenous traditions to show the right of auto-determination, this is the right to build up a world in accordance with the necessities and to build communication bridges and presence towards other latitudes and cultures.

This chapter focused on the intercultural universities and the educational model. After looking at different universities which exist, the history, current situation and future of this educational model, we can move on to the intercultural universities in Mexico.

### 6.5.2. Intercultural Universities in Mexico

In 2004 the first intercultural universities in Mexico were founded. The objective of this project of institutions of higher education is the education of the indigenous population of the country. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

These are the existing intercultural universities in Mexico: Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas, Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Tabasco, Universidad Intercultural Estado de México, Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Puebla, Universidad

Veracruzana Intercultural, Universidad Intercultural Indígena de Michoacán, Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo, Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Guerrero and Universidad Autónoma Indígena de México. (cf. Secretaría de Educación Superior, 2013)

The intercultural universities offer different studies, for example language and culture is one of them. As part of the language and culture study the integration of courses to become interpreters or translators is planned for the future. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

The Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo offers translating courses. Furthermore, they have three interpreting booths and the full equipment to offer interpreting classes. However, there are no professional interpreters who can teach these classes.

Why are these intercultural universities created in so-called indigenous areas? Why has such an intercultural model not been established for the whole society yet? The question is why persons in indigenous areas have to learn about interculturality and people from other areas do not? That leads us to the next question, whether interculturality can be taught or not?

Sigüenza Orozco (2010) explains that the general education and education designed for indigenous peoples is confronted with many problems and while these conditions are not properly analysed, pointed out and understood, talking about education in diversity or bilingual, bicultural or now intercultural education will not be anymore discursive than effective. (cf. Sigüenza Orozco, 2010, p. 635)

**La educación en general y en particular la dirigida a los indígenas presenta muchos problemas y mientras estas condiciones no sean debidamente analizadas, encausadas y comprendidas, hablar de educación en la diversidad o de educación bilingüe, bicultural o, ahora, intercultural; no dejará de ser más discursivo que efectivo.**  
(Sigüenza Orozco, 2010, p. 635)

Education has created a hierarchical society and now with the existence of intercultural universities and conventional universities this hierarchy has become even more visible. Sigüenza Orozco (2010) asks the question why the system designed for indigenous peoples is called indigenous or intercultural and the other system does not receive the description of formal or conventional. He explains that this shows that language is one of the first elements that transmits and generates inequality. (cf. Sigüenza Orozco, 2010, p. 635).

**La educación ha generado una sociedad jerárquica más aún ahora con la existencia de las universidades interculturales y las convencionales ¿Por qué el sistema dirigido a los indios se llama indígena o intercultural y el otro recibe el calificativo de formal/convencional? Esto demuestra que el lenguaje es uno de los primeros elementos que transmite y genera desigualdad.** (Sigüenza Orozco, 2010, p. 635).

This chapter focused on the intercultural universities in general. The next part focuses on the special case of the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*.

### 6.5.3. Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (UIMQRoo)

This chapter includes detailed information about the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*. Firstly, the history of the university is analysed, then the mission and vision of the *UIMQRoo* is discussed.

What were the reasons for the creation of this intercultural university? When was the university created? Which careers are offered at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo?

#### 6.5.3.1. Mission of the UIMQRoo

The Mission of the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo is to contribute to the socioeconomic development of the state of Quintana Roo and the region through the



training of professionals and the generation and the application of innovative knowledge; through the intercultural, multilingual education with a strong connection between the different sectors on a local, state, national and international level. At the same time, acknowledge and impulse all of the activities which promote the study, development and strengthening of the Maya language and culture in the Peninsula of Yucatán. (cf. UIMQRoo, Modelo Educativo Intercultural, 2010, p. 20)

**Contribuir al desarrollo socioeconómico del estado de Quintana Roo y la región, mediante la formación de profesionistas (profesional asociado, licenciatura y postgrado) y la generación y aplicación de conocimiento innovador; a través de un modelo educativo intercultural, multilingüe y con una fuerte vinculación entre los diferentes sectores a nivel local, estatal, nacional e internacional. Asimismo, reconocer e impulsar todas aquellas actividades que promuevan el estudio, desarrollo y fortalecimiento de la lengua y cultura Maya de la Península de Yucatán.**  
(UIMQRoo, Modelo Educativo Intercultural, 2010, p. 20)

The mission of the UIMQRoo concentrates on economic benefits. The mission does not include the revitalisation of Maya language and culture. Many students end up working in Xcaret, promoting the Maya culture in a romantic way for the tourist of western cultures.

This part focused on the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* and its mission.

Chapter six was about Education in Mexico from preschool to university. The education reform was discussed. Then the results of the questionnaire and tsikbal were analysed. Furthermore, this chapter presented the CONAFE and the intercultural universities, with a special focus on the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* and its mission.

The following chapter focuses on the National Institute for Indigenous Languages – the so-called Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI).

## 7. Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI)

The Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI) is the National Indigenous Languages Institute in Mexico City. The mission of the institute is outlined and the catalogue of languages is discussed.

Article 14 of the General Act of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples (*Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*) states that the National Institute for Indigenous Languages is created as a decentralised body of the Federal Public Administration, of public and social service, with legal personality and own budget, as a subdivision of the Ministry for Public Education. The objective is to promote the strengthening, preservation and development of indigenous languages spoken in the national territory, the knowledge and enjoyment of the cultural richness of the nation and advise to the three levels of government in order to articulate the public politic measures required in this area. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 8-9)

**Artículo 14. Se crea el Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas, como organismo descentralizado de la Administración Pública Federal, de servicio público y social, con personalidad jurídica y patrimonio propio, sectorizado en la Secretaría de Educación Pública, cuyo objeto es promover el fortalecimiento, preservación y desarrollo de las lenguas indígenas que se hablan en el territorio nacional, el conocimiento y disfrute de la riqueza cultural de la Nación, y asesorar a los tres órdenes de gobierno para articular las políticas públicas necesarias en la materie. [...] (INALI, 2012, p. 8-9)**

The National Institute for Indigenous languages has an interesting website, which includes the description and explanation of linguistic rights in different languages. Furthermore, there is a short video, which explains the linguistic diversity.

This video starts with a question and then describes and explains the linguistic diversity in Mexico: Do you know how many languages are spoken additionally to Spanish in our country? 68 and 364 variations, incredible, isn't it? If you speak one of these languages, you

might have noticed that in every community there are different words to the ones you use at home. Now imagine the differences you can find in the languages spoken all over Mexico. It is time to get to know different languages and why don't you learn them. We should feel very proud that we are able to communicate in our language and the language of our parents and grandparents. The *Guardavoces* (voice keepers) remind you that the indigenous languages have the same value as Spanish and therefore there is an act that protects the rights of the persons who like us speak a different language so all of us can communicate in the language each one of us speaks, have a name in our own language, have access to cultural, social and any other kind of information in our language. Speak, sing and write what we think, feel in our mother tongue. Receive medical attention in our language, study in our language and in Spanish and that our culture is respected. Be treated with justice and equally no matter which language we speak. And remember, we should not make fun of, offend or discriminate anybody because they speak a different language. (cf. INALI, 2013)

This chapter focused on the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (INALI) in Mexico. The information from this chapter is closely connected to the next chapter, namely the translation and interpretation of indigenous languages in Mexico.

## 8. Translation and Interpretation of Indigenous Languages in Mexico

The National Institute for Indigenous Languages in coordination with the Public Education Ministry took over the responsibility for the establishment regulations and creation of programmes for the certification and accreditation of interpreters and translators in indigenous languages. In 2005 a programme was developed in order to carry out the certification and accreditation of interpreters and translators in indigenous languages and Spanish. As a result of this programme various workshops and courses have been organised to train indigenous people as interpreters, translators and experts of indigenous languages, especially in law enforcement and administration institutions, health services and education. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432-433)

In 2000 the General Direction for Equality and Social Development (*Dirección General de Equidad y Desarrollo Social*) of the Federal District of Mexico organised a course for the training of interpreters and translators for indigenous languages and as a result the same year some members of different indigenous communities established a multicultural, plurilingual and multiethnic organization named *Organización de Traductores, Intérpretes Interculturales y Gestores en Lenguas Indígenas* (Organisation of Intercultural Translators, Interpreters and Promoters of Indigenous Languages). At the beginning this organisation comprised of translators and interpreters in 16 languages. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

**En un principio esta organización incluyó traductores e intérpretes en diecisiete lenguas como el mixteco, el chontal, el trique, el zapoteco, el tzotzil, el mazahua, el náhuatl, el otomí, etcétera. (Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)**

The work of these members of this organization consist in identifying persons in hospitals, shelters and forensic services elaborating expert reports about cultural practices in order to make the distinction between the national positive right and the common law of the indigenous peoples and realise translations and interpretations in the juridical and medical area. Up until now there has not been a specific interest in the official certification of these persons. Although the law underlines that interpreters and translators can ask for

professional fees for their work in accordance with the current tariff, in practice this has not been the case for these interpreters and translators of indigenous languages, because there are still cases in which they do not receive any payment at all. This is due to the absence of official recognition for these professions in the combination of the languages previously mentioned. The solution lies in the official certification, that is to say the formal recognition of translators and interpreters of indigenous languages with academic training. It is important to mention that up until now there is no kind of official exam to verify the knowledge of the Spanish languages of the persons who provide this service. The official certification would lead to better prepared professionals, better paid, better respected and of course a higher number of active professionals in these linguistic combinations. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432-433)

This chapter included information about the network of translators and interpreters in Mexico and programmes for the certification and accreditation of interpreters and translators in indigenous languages. Furthermore, the national register for interpreters and translators of indigenous languages was introduced. Does everyone have the right to speak in his or her mother tongue according to the information we have already read? Do indigenous people have the right to receive translators or interpreters? These questions lead us to the next chapter – indigenous human rights.

## 9. Indigenous Human Rights

This chapter focuses on indigenous human rights. This course is offered at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*, therefore this chapter will include findings of the observation of classes. Furthermore, the constitution, the translation of the constitution into the different indigenous languages, national and federal laws is discussed.

**Mexico's indigenous peoples have been denied rights for centuries. The Zapatista rose up in the southern state of Chiapas in 1994 to protest the repression of Indians across the country. Mexico's army fought to contain the guerrilla movement.** (Jandt, 1998, p. 420)

Fred Edmund Jandt uses different words to describe indigenous people in Mexico. He uses the terms Indian, indigenous and original people. (cf. Jandt, 1998, p. 420)

Which of these words is seen as politically correct? And which terms do the original people of Mexico use to define themselves? These questions are answered later in this work.

Language can be seen as a basic, human right. So this includes the protection from discrimination. The United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states in Article 3 that:

**Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.** (United Nations, 2008a, cited in Mair, 2013, p. 36)

This leads to the constitution and the general act of linguistic rights for indigenous people. This will show how the linguistic rights of indigenous peoples are stipulated.

## 9.1. Constitution

**In 1996, the government of Mexico signed an agreement to amend the state's and nation's constitution to guarantee respect for Indian languages and culture. This agreement marks the first time that the original peoples of Mexico have been recognized as equals. (Jandt, 1998, p. 420)**

The second article of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico speaks of a pluricultural state, which is originally held up by its indigenous peoples. They are the ones who descend from the population that inhabited the current territory of the country when the colonisation began and they hold up their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, or part of them. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 18)

Fraction IV of the seventh article of the General Educational Act states that through education the knowledge of the linguistic plurality of the nation and the respect for the linguistic rights of the indigenous population shall be promoted. The speakers of indigenous languages shall have access to obligatory education in their own language and Spanish. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 24)

**IV. Promover mediante la enseñanza el conocimiento de la pluralidad lingüística de la Nación y el respeto a los derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas. Los hablantes de lenguas indígenas, tendrán acceso a la educación obligatoria en su propia lengua y español. (INALI, 2012, p.24)**

The General Education Act states that the indigenous people have the right to access to education in their language and Spanish. However, this is not the case in Mexico. The interviews and questionnaires carried out in Mexico show that few speakers of indigenous languages have access to bilingual education.

## 9.2. General Act of Linguistic Rights for Indigenous Peoples

According to article three of the General Act of Linguistic Rights for Indigenous Peoples, the indigenous languages are an important part of the national cultural and linguistic heritage. The plurality of indigenous languages is one of the principal expressions of the pluricultural composition of the Mexican nation. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 3)

**Artículo 3. Las lenguas indígenas son parte integrante del patrimonio cultural y lingüístico nacional. La pluralidad de lenguas indígenas es una de las principales expresiones de la composición pluricultural del a Nación Mexicana.** (INALI, 2012, p. 3)

There are more and more projects and programmes promoting the cultural and linguistic heritage. However, this heritage is often promoted for economic reasons in order to make profit. In many tourist areas in Mexico, for example at Chichen Itza in Yucatan or along the Rivera Maya of Quintana Roo, the word Maya is being used to attract tourists and not to protect this national cultural and linguistic heritage.

According to article four the indigenous languages recognised in the terms of this present act and Spanish are national languages due to their historic origin, they have the same validity in their territory, location and context in which they are spoken. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 3)

**Artículo 4. Las lenguas indígenas que se reconozcan en los términos de la presente Ley y el español son lenguas nacionales por su origen histórico, y tienen la misma validez en su territorio, localización y contexto en que se hablen.** (INALI, 2012, p.3)

There is still a long way to go until the indigenous languages reach the same validity as Spanish. This article is an important step; however, it is not the case that indigenous languages and Spanish have the same validity at present. Spanish is still the dominant language and it will take a long time and effort to increase the prestige of indigenous languages again.



Article 10 is very interesting for translators and interpreters. According to this article the responsible federal law enforcement and administering justice bodies, including the farming and labour areas, provide what is necessary in order for indigenous peoples to be assisted free of charge all the time in the trials which are carried out by interpreters or defenders who have knowledge of the indigenous language and culture. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 3)

**Artículo 10. [...] Las autoridades federales responsables de la procuración y administración de justicia, incluyendo las agrarias y laborales, proveerán lo necesario a efecto de que en los juicios que realicen, los indígenas sean asistidos gratuitamente, en todo tiempo, por intérpretes y defensores que tengan conocimiento de su lengua indígena y cultura. [...] (INALI, 2012, p.3)**

The indigenous population does not always have access to fundamental rights, such as the access to information and the right to a just defence. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 431)

**Las condiciones de vida de la población indígena mexicana no son las mejores, en especial en lo que se refiere a derechos fundamentales, como el acceso a la información o el derecho a una defensa justa. (Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 431)**

Throughout the Mexican history, Spanish was enforced as the official language and the indigenous languages were left behind, because multilingualism was seen as an obstacle for the development and progress of the country. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 431-432)

After the Mexican Revolution the tendency towards including the indigenous culture in society by substituting the indigenous languages with Spanish predominated. They expected the disappearance of minority cultures through this procedure, because these were seen as an obstacle for the integration of the country. Little by little, hispanisation took place and the original languages and cultures of each person were not taken into consideration. (cf. Jansenson & Sada, n.d., p. 432)

With the creation of the General Coordination for Bilingual Intercultural Education (CGEIB) as part of the Public Education Ministry in the year 2000 first steps towards the improvement of intercultural bilingual education and the revaluation of indigenous languages were made.

According to article eleven, the federal and educational authorities of each state guarantee that the indigenous population has access to obligatory education, bilingual and intercultural and adopt the necessary measures in order for the educational system to assure respect for the dignity and identity of persons, independently from their language. At the same time, interculturality, multilingualism and the respect for diversity and the linguistic rights are promoted in medium and superior education. (cf. INALI, 2012, p. 4)

**Artículo 11. Las autoridades educativas federales y de las entidades federativas, garantizarán que la población indígena tenga acceso a la educación obligatoria, bilingüe e intercultural, y adoptarán las medidas necesarias para que en el sistema educativo se asegure el respeto a la dignidad e identidad de las personas, independientemente de su lengua. Asimismo, en los niveles medio y superior, se fomentará la interculturalidad, el multilingüismo y el respeto a la diversidad y los derechos lingüísticos.**  
(INALI, 2012, p.4)

The access to bilingual and intercultural education for the indigenous population is not yet sufficiently given. However, there are attempts to improve this. It is difficult to find bilingual intercultural schools; the main problems are that there is not enough educational material and not enough bilingual teachers. The creation of the intercultural universities in Mexico has been an important step towards promoting interculturality, multilingualism and respect for diversity and linguistic rights. This chapter listed all the different laws related to the rights of indigenous people in Mexico. The next chapter analyses the term interculturality.

## 10. Meaning of Interculturality

This chapter focuses on interculturality. The main questions to be answered in this chapter are: Why is the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* an intercultural university? What is taught in the class Intercultural Education? Can interculturality be taught? How do the students and professors interpret interculturality? The first part shows the findings and results of the questionnaires, interviews and the *tsikbal* in order to analyse what interculturality means and how different persons understand it.

### 10.1. Results of Questionnaires about Interculturality

Sixty-one students of the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* were questioned about interculturality. The results show that the words mostly used to define interculturality are culture, others, respect, living together and co-existence, tolerance, interaction, learning, exchange and acceptance. The majority of the students describe interculturality in a positive way, however two students say that interculturality does not exist.

46 out of 61 students use the term culture in their definition of interculturality. One student writes that it is the correlation that exists between different cultures. Or take the good of each culture. Another student writes that interculturality is the mixture of cultures, without discrimination of others.

**Es la correlación que existe entre diversas culturas.** (Questionnaire, Student 10)

**Tomar lo bueno de cada cultura.** (Questionnaire, Student 23)

**La interculturalidad para mí significa, la mezcla de culturas, sin discriminar a otras.** (Questionnaire, Student 35)

Many students use the term 'others' in their definitions. For example, towards others, the culture of others, learn from others, interaction with other cultures and so on. One student writes that interculturality is the interaction between two or more cultures without judging,

it is the respect for the culture of others.

**Es la interacion [interacción] entre dos o más cultura sin generar juicios, es el respeto por la cultura de otros.** (Questionnaire, Student 28)

This definition leads us to the next keyword, namely respect. 32 out of 61 students speak of respect when defining interculturality. This student writes that interculturality is the interaction of different cultures based on respect, tolerance and equality.

**Es la interacción de distintas culturas basadas en el respeto, la tolerancia, la equidad.** (Questionnaire, Student 44)

Most of the definitions that include the term respect also speak of co-existence or living together. One student defines interculturality as respect, tolerance and living together with other people from other places. Another student writes that interculturality is the co-existence and respect of different cultures. Or the co-existence and respect of two or more cultures, which enrich each other through their knowledge.

**La interculturalidad es el respeto, tolerancia, convivencia con otras personas de otros lugares.** (Questionnaire, Student 2)

**La interculturalidad para mi es la convivencia y el respeto hacia las diferentes culturas.** (Questionnaire, Student 5)

**Es la convivencia y respeto entre dos o más culturas que se enriquecen entre si con los saberes de cada uno.** (Questionnaire, Student 8)

23 out of 61 students mention the term living together or co-existence in their definition of interculturality. The definitions included following statements:

Live together with a society of different cultures.

**Convivir con una sociedad de diferentes culturas.** (Questionnaire, Student 1)

Interculturality is living together in a respectful way between various people of different cultures and beliefs.

**Es la convivencia que se da de manera respetuosa entre varias personas de diferentes culturas y creencias.** (Questionnaire, Student 7)

Living together with different people with different ideas, religions or from different countries and treat them the way we would like to be treated by them (without any insults and in a respectful way).

**Convivir con diferentes personas de diferentes ideas, religiones o países y tratarlos como nos gustaría que nos traten (sin insultos y respetuosamente).**  
(Questionnaire, Student 9)

Interculturality is a way in which various cultures can live together in the same place where neither discrimination nor racism exists.

**La interculturalidad es una forma de como varias culturas pueden convivir en un mismo espacio, en donde no se da la discriminación ni el racismo.**  
(Questionnaire, Student 12)

Live together with various cultures respecting their ideals and beliefs, living together in harmony.

**Convivir con varias culturas respetando sus ideales creencias conviviendo de manera armoniosa.** (Questionnaire, Student 18)

Living together with other cultures and respecting the customs and traditions they have depending on where they come from.

**Es la convivencia de otras culturas y respetando sus costumbres y tradiciones que tiene dependiendo de donde vienen.** (Questionnaire, Student 20)

Co-existence of various cultures and with respect towards others, having a good relation.

**Convivencia de varias culturas y con un respeto hacia otras teniendo una buena relación.** (Questionnaire, Student 21)

Interculturality is living together with respect towards everyone around us regardless of the defects.

**La Interculturalidad es convivir con respeto con todas y todos los que nos rodean sin importar los defectos.** (Questionnaire, Student 25)

The respect towards other cultures and living together with them.

**Es el respeto hacia otras culturas y la convivencia con ellos.** (Questionnaire, Student 32)

The action of living together with people from other cultures, but there has to be respect for both cultures.

**Es la acción de convivir con personas provenientes de otras culturas, pero tiene que haber respeto hacia ambas culturas.** (Questionnaire, Student 37)

Living together with others people from different cultures regardless of sex, religion, economic situation etc.

**Es convivir con otras personas de distintas culturas sin importar sexo, religión, condición económica etc.** (Questionnaire, Student 38)

Interculturality is the co-existence of people from different cultures, with different traditions or religion, who accept each other the way they are, regardless of colour, religion etc.

**La interculturalidad es la convivencia de personas de diferentes culturas, tradiciones y religión que se aceptan tal y como son, sin importar color,**

**religión etc.** (Questionnaire, Student 40)

Live together; interact with different cultures, respecting the ideas and interchange ideas.

**Convivir, interactuar con distintas culturas respetando ideas e intercambiando ideas.** (Questionnaire, Student 45)

Means living together, respecting other people from other cultures.

**Significa convivir, respetar, a otras personas con otras culturas.**  
(Questionnaire, Student 46)

Interculturality for me is the co-existence of people with different ways of thinking, respecting them; I also think that it is living together with people from other cultures with different languages.

**La interculturalidad para mí es convivir con gente con distintas modo de pensamiento respetándose, de igual manera pienso que es convivir con gente de otras culturas con idiomas distintas.** (Questionnaire, Student 53)

That we all can live together in harmony and in a respectful way regardless of origin, colour or race.

**Que todos podamos convivir con armonía y respeto sin importar origen, color o raza.** (Questionnaire, Student 60)

In harmony, co-existence between all people within a specific area, searching for the well being of all and each one of the members who form the community.

**En la armonía/convivencia entre todas las personas dentro de una zona en específico, buscando el bienestar de todos y de cada uno de los miembros que conforma la comunidad.** (Questionnaire, Student 61)

Three students mention the term tolerance in their definition of interculturality. The first student writes that interculturality is the respect, tolerance and co-existence of other people of other places. Another student writes that interculturality is the co-existence between different cultures in the same area where there is respect, tolerance, equality, etc. and they complement each other.

**Es la convivencia entre culturas distintas en un mismo espacio, donde hay respeto, tolerancia, igualdad, etc. y se complementan entre sí.** (Questionnaire, Student 41)

19 out of 61 students say that interaction is part of interculturality. One student explains that interculturality is interacting with other people who have different cultures and traditions. Another student writes that it is the interaction between various languages.

**Interactuar con otras personas que tienen diferentes culturas y tradiciones.**  
(Questionnaire, Student 24)

**Es la interacción entre varias lenguas.** (Questionnaire, Student 26)

Five out of 61 students mention the term learning in their definition of interculturality. A very strong definition is as follows: Interculturality is the situation which allows us to interact with different cultures and which allows us to learn and use the knowledge of different cultures for the purpose of developing a better future.

**Es la situación que nos permite interactuar con otras culturas y que nos permite aprender y usar los conocimientos de culturas diferentes para desarrollar un mejor futuro.** (Questionnaire, Student 6)

Four out of 61 students use the term exchange in their definition of interculturality. For example, it is an exchange of knowledge, traditions, respecting the thoughts of others.

**Es un intercambio de saberes, tradiciones, respetando los pensamientos de los demás.** (Questionnaire, Student 54)

Two students speak of acceptance. The first student writes that it is when two or more cultures interact between each other and learn from each other, respecting and accepting



the cultures as they are. The second student defines interculturality as the co-existence of persons from different cultures, traditions, religion, who accept each other the way they are, regardless of colour, religion etc.

**Es cuando dos o más culturas interactúan entre sí y aprenden unos de otras respetándose y aceptando las culturas como son.**

(Questionnaire, Student 17)

**La interculturalidad es la convivencia de personas de diferentes culturas, tradiciones y religión que se aceptan tal y como son, sin importar color, religión etc.** (Questionnaire, Student 40)

As you can see the majority of the students questioned at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo define interculturality in a positive way. However, two out of 61 students write that interculturality does not exist. The first student writes that interculturality is a form of life in which centralism does not exist, in which all persons have the same rights and no one is worth more than the other. In the opinion of the student, interculturality does not exist – however, he leaves a question mark after his comment.

**Es una forma de vida, en la cual no existe un centralismo donde todas las personas tienen los mismos derechos y ninguno es más que otro. Sin embargo en mi opinión no existe tal interculturalidad ...?** (Questionnaire, Student 29)

The second student writes that interculturality is like a fictional novel because interculturality does not exist.

**Que es como una novela de ficción porque la Interculturalidad no existe.**

(Questionnaire, Student 47)

The results of the questionnaire show that the majority of the students use the term culture in the definition of interculturality. The majority of the students questioned define interculturality by using positive words – such as respect, tolerance, equality, interaction, learning, co-existence, enrich, knowledge and living together. Two out of sixty-one students questioned claim that interculturality does not exist. However, none of the

students defines interculturality as something negative.

The research work did not only consist of questionnaires. The next part focuses on the results of conversations (*Tsikbal*) carried out at the UIMQRoo.

## 10.2. Results of the Conversations

According to a professor at the UIMQRoo interculturality is a practice. Europe is multicultural but the question remains whether it is intercultural. There are many cultures and at the same time there are not. The persons are multicultural, but the term intercultural on a macro level, a state-level is just a discourse, not more. Because behind all there will always be a dominant culture above all the other cultures. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**El término intercultural en términos más macros, más estatales, pues se da cuenta que son discursos nada más, porque en el fondo siempre va a haber una cultura dominante, no, sobre los demás.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

There are always minority languages, it is a historical point. It is part of history, conquers, discrimination, powerful countries, less powerful countries always existed. There have always been more dominant languages than others. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**Entonces siempre hay lenguas minatorias, entonces, es un asunto de la historia. Como es parte de la historia, siempre había conquista, discriminación, países poderosos, países no poderosos.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

Ligia explains that the concept of interculturality is a daily and constant practice – and the respect towards the other and oneself. It is about knowing your own identity, problems and opening up. It is about a human being that does not just accept, but

recognises and lives with different persons, cultures, and different languages in a non-dominant way. (cf. Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**La interculturalidad como se esta tratando de implementar si es una noción que haga un mejor ser humano no, un ser humano que acepte no solo acepte que reconozca y conviva con lo diferente, con diferentes sujetos, culturas, con diferentes idiomas de una manera no dominante, no.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

Ligia describes that interculturality can exist. It can be a kind of interculturality where relations are dominated. Interculturality can exist if relations are more equal, fairer. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**[...] la interculturalidad puede existir. Puede ser una interculturalidad en dónde la relaciones son dominadores, un montón dominado y eso es interculturalidad, es una relación de dominación, entonces aquí el chiste es cómo es una interculturalidad [...] relaciones sean un poco más equitativas, más justas.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

Ligia was asked what she thought about interculturality and how she would define it. She describes that it is about changing the relation of domination and rejection. The most prestigious is often accepted but the less prestigious is rejected. So it is about this complicated and complex situation. Ligia thinks that we should include interculturality in our daily lives, we can react to our own racism. (cf. T Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**Me preguntas por la interculturalidad, es cómo yo cambio esta forma de relacionar de una diferente dominación de prestigio y de rechazo. Lo más prestigioso acepto pero lo que no tiene tanto prestigio rechazo. Entonces sí, es esta situación complicada y compleja. [...] A mí me gusta el concepto, la noción, lo veo como pues con optimismo ... lo convertimos en una vida cotidiana, somos capaces de reaccionar sobre nuestro propio racismo.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

Abel, a teacher at the UIMQRoo, explains that interculturality is the rescue of the same essence of a human being, because the human being has never been active in being creative. The intercultural university of Mexico was born in the same way as health was born. For example nobody speaks about health, no one if there is not sickness before. [...] All the universities of the world should be intercultural, it is a universe of knowledge that you copy from different civilisations to make you a better person, but the conventional university in Mexico just took the occidental knowledge and the Mesoamerican cultures were forgotten. So interculturality is not indigenista, we are not trying to create an ethnocentric feeling within the students – telling them the Mayas are the best in the whole world – because that is not the case. [...] (cf. Tskikbal, Abel, 26.11.2013)

**Poco a poco afortunadamente la universidad lo ha cambiando, es el sentimiento de la gente con respetoso con su propio raíz, el sentir orgulloso.**

(Tsikbal, Abel, 26.11.2013)

Abel (2013) also explains that many persons used to switch to Spanish and hide the fact that they could speak Maya. Fortunately, the universities have changed this little by little. The persons have more respect and are proud of their roots and at the same time they learn about other cultures of other parts of the world. (cf. Tsikbal, Abel, 26.11.2013)

**Para mí pues lo intercultural es la identificación de uno mismo.** (Tsikbal,

Hilario, 02.12.2013)

Hilario, a Maya teacher at the UIMQRoo explains that interculturality is about the identification of oneself. Furthermore, he says that after identifying oneself it is about opening up for new knowledge, for interactions. First you have your language, then you have your identity. Interculturality means being tolerant. (cf. Tsikbal, Hilario, 02.12.2013)

This part included quotes and analyses of the conversations with teachers from the UIMQRoo. Interculturality is defined as a daily practice. In their opinion interculturality can exist if we open up towards other cultures. However, it is not always so easy to implement interculturality in our daily lives. This leads to the next part of this chapter, namely Mexico's Struggle for Interculturality.

### 10.3. Mexico's Struggle for Interculturality

Is it possible to teach interculturality? The results of the questionnaires and conversations show that interculturality can only be learned by living it. Interculturality should exist for the whole society, not only at universities in rural areas far away from other cultures. Interculturality has to be taught in urban areas as well, especially in urban areas because there is a mixture of different cultures and languages.

The General Coordination for Bilingual Intercultural Education of the Ministry for Education defines interculturality as a key word in the material intended for teacher training. According to the ministry, interculturality is a social situation oriented to favour the understanding, tolerance and the mutual respect for identities and cultural diversity as a form of living. It is also an educational proposal in order to achieve this situation. (cf. SEP, 2002a: 5 cited in Brumm, 2010, p. 74)

**La Coordinación General de la Educación Intercultural Bilingüe de la SEP define la "interculturalidad" como palabra clave en sus materiales destinados a la formación docente: "Situación social orientada a propiciar el entendimiento, la tolerancia y el respeto mutuo a las identidades y a la diversidad cultural como una forma de vida. También es una propuesta educativa para alcanzar esta situación." (SEP, 2002a: 5 cited in Brumm, 2010, p. 74)**

#### 10.4. Difference between Multiculturality and Interculturality

In chapter 10.2. Ligia (2013) describes in one of the conversations that “Europe is multicultural but the question remains whether it is intercultural.” In order to understand what interculturality means the following concepts of multiculturalism, pluriculturalism, intercultural, transcultural have to be defined.

To start off, we can see that the term of multiculturality refers to the existence of many cultures, individuals who belong to different cultures and the co-existence with different cultures. The European Council defines it as “the situation of societies, groups or social entities in which many individuals belong to different cultures living together, regardless of the style of living chosen” (Aguado 1991, p. 43). When we speak about multicultural education nowadays, the general objective is to “transmit, promote, facilitate the critical understanding of culture, the cultures” (Gracia 1997, p. 247), but it is not enough to know the cultural and linguistic diversity, the different forms of transmission to the students to achieve the construction of knowledge. Therefore it is necessary to not forget that culture is transmitted through different ways and through diverse agents. (cf. López Marín, 2012, p. 93-94)

**[...] El término de multicultural se refiere a la existencia de muchas culturas, esto es, a individuos que pertenecen a diferentes culturas y la convivencia con culturas diferentes. (López Marín, 2012, p. 93-94)**

The term pluricultural is nearly synonym that simply indicates the existence of a particular situation, in other words it is used in the same circumstances, but instead of emphasising many cultures in relation, only plurality is highlighted. (cf. López Marín, 2012, p. 93-94)

**El término de pluricultural es casi un sinónimo que indica simplemente la existencia de una situación particular, o sea que se utiliza en las mismas circunstancias, pero en lugar de hacer énfasis a muchas culturas en relación, se resalta solamente su pluralidad. (López Marín, 2012, p. 93-94)**

With respect to interculturality one refers through the ideology, ways of thinking to claim its historic memory, additionally to the politics in which different identities are recognised. (cf. López Marín, 2012, p. 93-94)

**Y con respecto a la interculturalidad se refiere a través de la ideología, formas de pensar, que reclaman su memoria histórica, además de su política en donde se reconozca las diferencias identitarias. (López Marín, 2012, p. 93-94)**

It is important to clarify when the term 'interculturality' was founded within the discourse in Mexico. The direct foregoing of interculturality can be found in the establishment of the educational political measures with the goal of assimilation of indigenous people. It started off with bilingual bicultural education and over the years it then changed to bilingual intercultural or intercultural bilingual education. (cf. López Marín, 2012, p. 94)

The directives of the UNESCO state that Intercultural Education is an answer to the challenge of providing quality education for all. It is inscribed in the human rights perspective, such as it is expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. According to the declaration, education has the objective of full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for all human rights and fundamental liberties; education benefits understanding, tolerance and the friendship between all nations and all ethnic and religious groups and promotes the development of the activities of the United Nations to uphold peace. (cf. UNESCO, n.d., p. 8)

**La educación intercultural es una respuesta al reto de proporcionar educación de calidad para todos. Se inscribe en la perspectiva de los derechos humanos, tal como se expresa en la Declaración Universal de Derechos Humanos (1948): La educación tendrá por objeto el pleno desarrollo de la personalidad humana y el fortalecimiento del respeto a los derechos humanos y a las libertades fundamentales; favorecerá la comprensión, la tolerancia y la amistad entre todas las naciones y todos los grupos étnicos o religiosos, y**

**promoverá el desarrollo de las actividades de las Naciones Unidas para el mantenimiento de la paz. (UNESCO, n.d., p. 8)**

Furthermore, the member states of UNESCO recently demanded that there be more attention toward the bonds between culture and education. (cf. UNESCO, n.d., p. 9)

**Además, los Estados Miembros de la UNESCO pidieron recientemente que se prestara más atención a los vínculos entre la cultura y la educación. (UNESCO, n.d., p. 9)**

When the topic of education and multiculturalism is discussed, the main problem is to know how to ensure, with some of the tensions that inevitably arise, the conciliation of conceptions of the world that compete against each other. These tensions reflect the diversity of values that coexist in the multicultural world. Often they cannot be resolved with a simple solution of the one or the other. However, the dynamic exchange between aspects in contention is what creates richness for the debate about education and interculturality. (cf. UNESCO, n.d., p. 11)

Language is one of the most universal and diverse forms of expression of the human culture, and maybe the most essential. It is the core of identity, memory and transmission of knowledge issues. (cf. UNESCO, n.d., p. 13)

**El lenguaje es una de las formas más universales y diversas de expresión de la cultura humana, y tal vez la más esencial. Constituye la médula de las cuestiones de identidad, memoria y transmisión del conocimiento. (UNESCO, n.d., p. 13)**

Interculturality is a dynamic concept and refers to developmental relations in cultural groups. It has been defined as the presence and the equal interaction of different cultures and the possibility to generate shared cultural expressions, acquired through dialogue and attitude of mutual respect. Interculturality involves multiculturalism and is the result of



intercultural exchange and dialogue on a local, national, regional and international level.  
(cf. UNESCO, n.d., p. 17)

**La interculturalidad es un concepto dinámico y se refiere a las relaciones evolutivas entre grupos culturales.** (UNESCO, n.d., p. 17)

Like Sylvia Schmelckes (2003) describes interculturality as a concept that intends to go further than multiculturalism, it is a concept that intends to go further than the recognition of diversity toward the construction of new forms of relations. Interculturality recognises that the loss of capacity of cultural production and the impossibility of application of productive process, involves undoubtedly the invasion of the dominant culture and economy on the other cultures. (cf. Saldívar, 2006, p. 14-15)

Teaching the mother tongue should not be a mechanism of transition to learn and for the daily use of Spanish in the educational process. The majority of the experiences of bilingual education show that the native language is used as a daily form of teaching during the first few years, but the texts are used in Spanish and the native language is dropped later. Bilingualism and interculturality propose the coordinated use of the native language and Spanish, this means speaking, writing, reading and understanding in both languages. (cf. Saldívar, 2006, p. 16)

**El bilingüismo y la interculturalidad plantean el manejo coordinado del idioma materno y del español, es decir, hablar, escribir, leer y entender en ambos idiomas.** (Saldívar, 2006, p. 16)

This part was about the difference between multiculturality and interculturality. The concept that interculturality goes further than multiculturality seems a very good description of the difference of these two important concepts. Most of the definitions and descriptions describe interculturality in a positive way. However, there are also critical views of interculturality, these are analysed in the following chapter.

## 10.5. Critical Views of Interculturality

Bartomeo Meliá (2012) explains at a round table that interculturality is a nice word. Bartomeo was fascinated with interculturality for some time. But then realised that this interculturality is a great parody and a big lie. And why? He describes that this is because interculturality can only exist if we have a dialogue between people at the same level, the same category, and the same system. And the programmes of interculturality are nearly always in a way that the indigenous person is intercultural, or that he/she adapts to our culture. In Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina you will not find anyone in this so-called interculturality trying to learn an indigenous language. All the indigenous persons have to know how to be intercultural, change to this new culture. Interculturality that is not mutual, is not intercultural. (cf. Bartomeo Meliá, Mesa Redonda, 2012)

As already analysed in chapter 10.1., the majority of the students who filled out the questionnaire about education and interculturality described interculturality in a positive way. However, there were students who were more critical about the term interculturality and even wrote that interculturality does not exist.

As we can see from this part of chapter ten, there are also critical views of the term interculturality. For some this term is just a modern word, others say it does not or cannot exist.

This chapter explained the term interculturality. This chapter included the results and findings of the questionnaires, interviews, *tsikbal* and class observations. Interculturality is related to languages spoken in intercultural contexts and this leads us to the next chapter, namely the meaning of Maya and culture.

## 11. Maya

The majority of the research work for this diploma thesis was carried out at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo. Therefore, this chapter focuses on one specific indigenous culture and language, namely Maya. First of all the meaning of Maya and Culture is analysed. Then there is an analysis on whether Maya is taught as a first (L1) or second (L2) language at the UIMQRoo. Then the attitude towards indigenous languages is outlined and analysed, before reaching the description of identity.

### 11.1. Meaning of Maya and Culture

This chapter focuses on the term Maya and culture.

The first class visited at the UIMQRoo was indigenous human rights. The students were sitting in a circle, this way there seemed to be more confidence and trust between the students and the professor. The professor was talking to the students about the *tsikbal* and asked the students what *tsikbal* meant. One answer was as follows: '*Tiene el sabor de una conversación, pero con más confianza.*' – 'It is similar to a conversation, but with more trust.' A further question in class was: '*Qué significa indígena?*' – 'What does indigenous mean?' One of the answers was: '*Indígena significa originario de aquí*' – 'Indigenous means being a native of a certain place.' But when the professor asked the students who was indigenous, nobody raised their hand. The majority of the class does not like being called indigenous.

In Europe the term indigenous does not have a negative connotation, but many natives do not like being called that way. Due to the fact that this term has a negative connotation for many natives, it is important to include this discourse about this term in this work. Dr. Castillo Cocom explained '*a veces soy indígena, a veces no*' – 'Sometimes I am indigenous, sometimes I am not.' Why do we have this romantic concept of indigenous people or Maya in our head?

A further discussion point was the term indigenous human rights. How come there are indigenous human rights if human rights already exist and which explain that every

person has the same rights. Indigenous persons are often discriminated and not as protected within society.

Before attending some Maya classes at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* during the research work for this diploma thesis, the professor explained to that there are more or less three groups of students – the ones who know Maya, those who understand Maya and those who are learning Maya from the beginning. The class was very mixed; some could understand Maya and others could not follow. The most surprising thing was that Maya is taught as a foreign language and not as a first language. Many students speak Maya at home, however they were never taught how to write in Maya until they came to the *UIMQRoo*.

According to Erll and Gymnich (2010) cultures are always in movement and therefore they are not static. There are two main causes for cultural changes, namely the historical experience and the intercultural process. (cf. Erll and Gymnich, 2010, p. 26)

Welsch (1997) states that cultures are no longer homogenous or separated, as they have adapted a new kind of form. He describes this form as transcultural because it crosses the traditional cultural boundaries as if they did not exist. (cited in Erll and Gymnich, 2010, p. 27)

In a conversation with Sánchez Baeza (2013) explained the meaning of Maya and included some more information about the Maya language. He explains that when we say good day, Maya-speakers wanting to make a translation, *say maalob kin* (good sun). But in reality they do not say it that way, they say *bixabel*. The literal translation of *bixabel* would be how is your way. This does not sound at all like good day, but it means a lot more. It is a different Cosmo vision, the way the Maya see the world. The occident tries to go back to that way of seeing the world, things that are simply part of the Maya language. In Maya there is no difference between Mr tree or Mr whoever, it is the same as Mr Miguel. For them the respect for human beings is the same as for the earth, sun, rain or cornfield. When they go to the cornfield, they organise a ceremony to say thank you. It is much further than we can imagine. Maya culture is a lot richer and closer to nature. Let's say that we from the

occident have moved far away from that. But the Maya-speakers are a lot closer to nature, the way it should be. (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)

**Cuando nosotros decimos buenos días, las personas mayas queriendo hacer una traducción, pues dicen *maalob kin* (buenos sol). Pero de verdad ellos no lo dicen así, dicen *mi shabel*, en la traducción literal al español sería – cómo esta tu camino. [...] (Tsikbal, Sánchez Baeza, 30.10.2013)**

This part was about the meaning of Maya and culture. It showed that there are different views of indigenous languages, in this case Maya, and the different indigenous cultures depending if you belong to an indigenous group or if you view the language and the culture from a different perspective outside of this specific group. It is important to analyse how persons belonging to a specific culture see themselves and their language and culture and respect this, because they are the experts of their own culture and language.

## 11.2. Maya as L1 or L2

This chapter explains the terms L1 and L2 and then analyses whether Maya is taught as a first language (L1) or second language (L2) at the UIMQRoo. Why is the university called Maya although Maya is not taught as a primary language? Does the mission, politics speak about Maya as a first language or a second language? The results were obtained through observation of classes.

This chapter focuses on the language Maya at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*. The findings show that Maya is taught as a second language. However, many teachers are committed to including more and more Maya in their classes. For example there is one class where the teacher encouraged the students to learn the Maya names of the different types of soils. The students asked their parents and grandparents and then presented the different types of soils, including names and descriptions in Maya. Other classes where Maya was spoken were the interpreting classes, intercultural education classes and the classes about teaching methods and techniques. Furthermore, there are signs in Maya at the university as the images below show (see Image 2).

The class observations and interviews with the professors and students show that Maya is taught as a L2 at the *UIMQRoo*. There are no classes taught in Maya. At the moment it is not possible to teach other classes in Maya because not all students understand, speak, read and write in Maya. One teacher explained that there were three groups of students – those who know Maya, those who can understand Maya and those who are learning Maya from the beginning. In some of the more advanced classes some students, usually native speakers of the Maya language, responded in Maya if the teacher asked a question in Maya. Others responded in Spanish although they could already understand Maya.

A Maya teacher at the *UIMQRoo* explained the difference between teaching in Maya and teaching Maya as a second language. She explained that on the one hand there are pupils whose mother tongue is Maya. They are taught in Maya because it is the language they understand, so Maya is used as an instruction tool, a teaching and learning medium. On the other hand there is Maya as a foreign language, so you have to teach the students the pronunciation for example. (cf. Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

**La enseñanza, vamos a llamarla la enseñanza en maya, [...] hay niños hablantes de la lengua maya, enseñas en maya porque su lengua materna es maya. Para que tu puedes enseñarles tiene que ser en la lengua maya para que puedan entender, sí como medio de instrucción, medio de enseñanza y aprendizaje.** (Tsikbal, Florinda, 27.11.2013)

There are some students at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* who already know how to read, speak and pronounce Maya because it is their mother tongue. However, there are also students who start Maya at zero and therefore they have to learn the correct pronunciation. Some students have difficulties with the pronunciation.

López Marín (2012) explains that the *Universidad Intercultural del Estado de México* is a new institution with the general goal to contribute to the rescue and distribution of the cultural and linguistic expressions to establish a communication link between the different

indigenous communities of the country with the modern world through a critical and reflexive vision. Furthermore the university allows the elaboration of appropriate development projects according to the expectations and interests and therewith attend the necessities which a multicultural society present which characterises this country. (cf. López Marín, 2012, p. 91)

According to Schmelkes (2012) the main difficulty is diglossia. Diglossia is given when there is no valuation of the context in general and for example, in Mexico the indigenous language is a subject taught three hours per week at the moment after the last educational reform. This is an example of institutionalised diglossia. However, the generalised practise is still the direct hispanisation. This is still a common practice in the schools in Mexico. An innovative project of double immersion is being carried out, which started with the children of first and second grade and these children obtained better results in reading in their own language and Spanish than those in fifth and sixth grade. Therefore, it can be seen a topic of intercultural, inclusive and equal education politics. It has already been shown that this is possible. The other great difficulty, also a result of diglossia, is the alphabet of indigenous languages, of grammar in other cases and in all cases the written production of the minority language. Therefore, linguistic political measures are required which document the languages and reach a consensus about how these languages are to be written, elaborate educational material in indigenous languages, make the use of indigenous languages public in discourses, in laws in the mass media and in the internet. (cf. Schmelkes, Round Table, 2012)

At the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo there was a discussion about taking Maya off the curriculum plan for students who did not come from the Maya-speaking region.

**Igual que aquí, hubo hace unos meses que yo estuve aquí en una discusión fuerte porque se quería quitar el maya para la gente que vino de fuera.**

(Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

The Maya teachers and many others were against this proposal. The discussions went on

for some weeks. In the end, this proposal was not implemented and many hope that the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo will continue teaching Maya as a subject for all students, even the ones who did not grow up in the Maya-speaking region but decide to come to the intercultural university.

This chapter was about Maya as a L1 or L2. The interviews show that Maya is taught as a second language for various reasons. The next part focuses on the attitude towards indigenous languages in order to understand why so many students do not speak Maya at home.

### 11.3. Attitude towards indigenous languages

The information and data collected from the interviews show that many parents do not teach their children Maya because they think it is more important for them to speak Spanish. However, thanks to the *UIMQRoo* the status of Maya in the community has increased and more and more people recognise the importance of Maya. Some still see Maya as an obstacle because it is a minority language. The creation of the *UIMQRoo* was an important step toward the revaluation of the Maya language.

A professor of the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* explains that there has been a change of attitude. Many people have now recognised that their children or grandchildren should be bilingual. This is an impact of the university. (cf. Tskibal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**Hay un cambio de actitud en las personas, digamos que [...] escritura, continuidad, escuela de la lengua maya, ahora ven la necesidad de que sí sus hijos, sus nietos sean bilingües, pero ahora. Eso sí es un impacto de la universidad.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

It is a revaluation, but also a process of reversion of discrimination. There is a lot missing in the institutions, in the institutional imagination and also in everyday life. Because there has been a change, when this teacher arrived here and asked her students who spoke Maya,



very few responded. Afterwards she noticed that there were many more who spoke Maya. However, they did not want to tell the teacher because of bad experiences. On the other hand, the generations today, if you ask them it is often the other way round. They put up their hand and sometimes they are not even Maya-speakers. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**Es una revalorización, pero también un proceso de reversión de la discriminación.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

The teacher explains that in fact, she never heard anybody from the first generation speak Maya here at university, because in the area of education the main language was always Spanish. Education is in Spanish and many years ago the pupils were not allowed to speak their native language at school. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**De la primera generación de hecho también nunca escuchaba aquí en la universidad hablar en lengua maya, no, porque el ámbito educativo siempre fue castellano, no. la educación en castellano y sí, en la escuela hace muchos años no se permitían a los chicos hablar su lengua.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

There has been a change of attitude regarding language in general, at university. It is a positive impact, but the process is still on going. The teacher adds that for years the Maya language was censured. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**Había cambio de actitud de la lengua en general, en la universidad ... si tiene un impacto positivo. Pero es un proceso.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**[...] entonces son años y años de censura de su lengua maya.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

One of the missions is to revert the process of loss the language, that is the intention of the General Coordination for Bilingual Intercultural Education in Mexico (*CGEIB – Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*) with the combination of

intercultural education. At least those are the plans. The teacher thinks that the university plays an important role, but it is not enough. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

**[...] una de las misiones de hacer universidades es en el ámbito de los estudiantes, es revivir un poco todo ese proceso de pérdida, verdad de la lengua, es un poco de la intención de la CGEIB como combinación de educación intercultural.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

The process of discrimination has to be reverted, the processes of the omission of the language and the individuals has to be revived, because there is an obligation of our teachers and students at this university to continue forcing a stronger focus on language and the culture of the individual speakers. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)

So here at this university it costs a lot of effort to put positive issues for the language in place. It is a political and linguistic fight. In an exercise of the sociolinguistic course of political linguistics we saw that the linguistic landscape is really dominated by the omission of the Maya language. In reality and also at university. So a small project was started. An educational exercise of the course was to make the language visible with letters. The students presented a very nice project where they wanted to paint the walls with slogans; they presented the idea of a mural. However, the only thing achieved were small notices at the university, for example signs in the restrooms. They had to speak to the rector because they did not receive permission to put the signs up at the university. (cf. Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11. 2013)

**Entonces un proyectito, un ejercicio escolar digamos del curso era hacer visible la lengua en letreros. Y de hecho los estudiantes presentaron un proyecto muy bonito para pintar las paredes con lemas – un mural presentaron. El único que logramos era los letreros que ves allí – son de mis estudiantes. Y para lograrlo, tuvimos que hablar con el rector porque aquí no nos daban permiso.** (Tsikbal, Ligia, 25.11.2013)



*Image 2: Sign in Maya at the UIMQRoo (2013)*

The linguistic landscape of the university is not as diverse as imagined. There are some small signs in Maya, however the feeling of an intercultural multilingual university is not given. Although there are Maya-speaking teachers and students, the main communication language is Spanish at the university. There are some teachers and students who encourage their colleagues to speak Maya by asking questions or greeting them in their language.

There have been some attempts to improve the intercultural image of the university, but unfortunately these little projects were not always successful because the students and teachers were not given permission.

One of the main Mexican newspapers “La Jornada” recently published an edition with content in Maya. This edition will be published every day in Mérida, the capital of the state of Yucatán in the southeast of Mexico. (cf. La Jornada, 2015)

This part of this chapter was about the attitude towards indigenous languages with a special focus on the linguistic landscape at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*. Furthermore, it included a positive example of interculturality in the region. The publication of a Mayan edition of the Jornada is an important step towards the revaluation of this indigenous language and culture.

#### 11.4. Time and Space for Maya

During the visit to the *Universidad Intercultural Maya* the author of this work sat in at a Maya class. In this class the teacher spoke about tenses, he explained that tenses do not exist in the Maya language.

**En la lengua maya no hay tiempos, solo momentos y espacios.** (Nota de clase de Maya, 23.09.2013)

Castillo Cocom (2012) explains that in the occident notions of time and space are often divided into 'the before', 'the during', and 'the after'. He describes this as an arbitrary segmentation. (cf. Castillo Cocom, 2012, p. 230)

According to Castillo Cocom (2012) Maya does not have a tense as such, but there is a way to express whether an action has been completed, is just beginning, ending or in progress. (cf. Castillo Cocom, 2012, p. 232)

So if no tenses exist, the question is if it is possible speak about the past, present and future of Intercultural Education in this work. Intercultural Education can be viewed from the perspective of the past, present and future, because that is the way the author was "taught/aculturated" to think. However, the author has to reflect and question the concept of time and space in this work because she is writing about interculturality and that means trying to understand the different concepts in the different cultures represented in this work.

A term and topic closely connected to the attitude towards languages is identity. The next part focuses on identity in an intercultural society.

### 11.5. Identity

Identity is a requisite for interculturality. According to Brumm (2010) promoting identity, the belonging to a community of speakers, sharing values, believes, traditions and a vision of the world is best done by teaching, using and revitalising the language.

**Fomentar la identidad, la pertenencia a una comunidad de hablantes, compartir valores, creencias, tradiciones y visión del mundo se hace de la mejor manera enseñando, usando y revitalizando la lengua.** (Brumm, 2010, p. 76)

We understand identity as the construction of a personal and social self through the process of recognition and identification of values. Identity refers to a system of values, believes, attitudes and behaviours that are communicated to each member of the group. Identity includes and implicates a way of feeling, understanding and acting in the world and also the assumption of specific values, customs and ideas. The collective memory transmitted through family, school and the mass media plays an important role in the community identity. Each person has multiple identities and identity references which leads to concepts such as multi-belonging or pluri-identity. Therefore, identity is a multidimensional concept in which different elections regarding religion, values, language, gender etc. converge, configured through the combination and integration of all of them. Therefore it is legitimate to speak of multiple identities: personal identity, cultural identity, linguistic identity, political, religious, gender-related, citizen-related, etc. (cf. Colás Bravo, 2006, p. 29-30)

This part of chapter 11 was about identity. It showed that identity is a requisite for interculturality. We have to know and value our identity in order to strengthen interculturality.

Chapter eleven included the meaning of culture and Maya, descriptions of the instruction of the Maya language, the attitude towards indigenous languages, time and space for Maya and identity. The following chapter focuses on the path towards an intercultural plurilingual education.

## 12. Towards an Intercultural Plurilingual Education

This chapter focuses on the future of intercultural education – towards an Intercultural Plurilingual Education.

Navarrete, del Carmen and Pérez (2012) explain a new kind of education. By implementing and promoting a qualitative intercultural-trilingual education, from the area of basic education and in a transversal manner in all the educational programmes of the university we can generate new knowledge as a product of synergies between the occidental cognitive processes and the ones from the local culture. (cf. Navarrete, del Carmen, Pérez, 2012)

**Implementar y promover una educación intercultural-trilingüe de calidad, desde el área de Formación Básica, y de manera transversal en todos los Programas Educativos (PE's) de la universidad, para generar nuevos conocimientos producto de sinergias entre procesos cognitivos occidentales y los de la cultura local.** (Navarrete, del Carmen, Pérez, 2012)

### 12.1. A different school

The renovation of school from an intercultural point of view is frequently associated with changes of the curriculum. The goals, contents, methodology, resources and evaluation system are often changed, however this is often not sufficient. The form in which professors are selected and students are grouped are also an important factor when it comes to renovating the school system and working towards a different school. Other points which have to be taken into consideration are the understanding of space and time and above all the forms of participation of the students, professors, parents, other family members and the community.

Aguado Odina (2006) asks the question what the mental image, the metaphor is when we think of an intercultural school? He explains that for us an intercultural school is an organism that is alive, that functions as a system, as a complex system led by people who reflect and that is characterised by processes that change, transform and

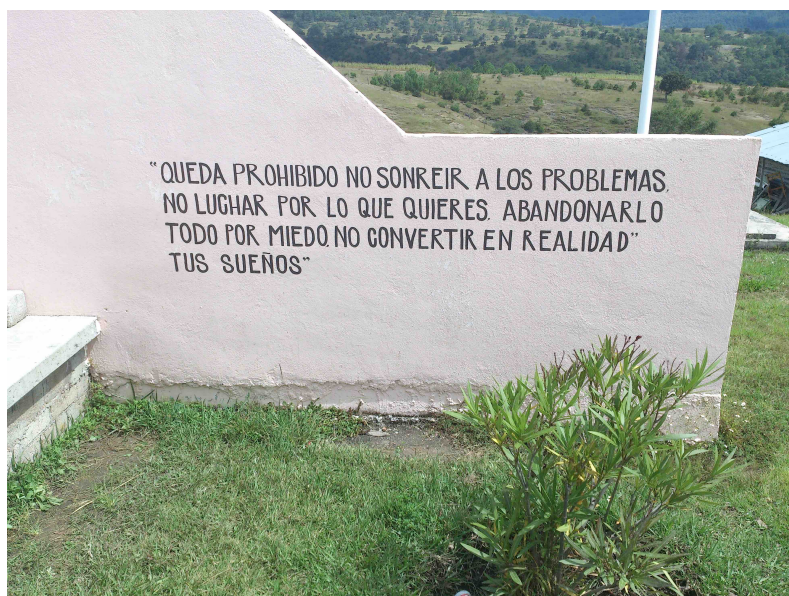
develop. According to Odiano this means that the school is a complex system in which different bodies interact to fulfil a function (such as teaching, learning) for the purpose of maintaining the school alive. The school is a brain, an organ that thinks and learns, that analyses and makes decisions. The school is in a stadium of constant change and transformation, is not static, it is oriented towards change and learning. This metaphor of the structure of the school is the underlying reason for the so-called democratic schools or inclusive schools. The overlapping of democratic schools, inclusive schools or intercultural schools is evident. In this moment it is important to have in mind that the organisation of the school is affected by external factors: legal framework, the structure of the educational system, the roles of professors who apply these regulations, the working framework of the European Union and the local initiatives, the continuous teacher training. (cf. Aguado Odina, 2006, p. 148)

**Yo me imagino una universidad con diferente oferta académica, me imagino una universidad con egresados laborando en la universidad, entregándole algo que la universidad les dio. (Tsikbal, Abel, 26.11.2013)**

Abel (20013), a professor at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo, speaks about the kind of university he imagines – a university with different academic careers, he imagines a university where graduates from the same university work, giving something back the university gave them, he imagines a university with different careers, such as law – indigenous law. This career would be important, so the students know their fundamental rights – in their native language. Graduates can then work as interpreters to support others, to explain things in their mother tongue, to defend them in their mother tongue, to help them with legal matters. He can imagine a postgraduate study like that at this university. At the moment there is a postgraduate in Intercultural Education. He can imagine a postgraduate study in health, because it is very important. That is one of the most important things, because we cannot develop without this basis – which is health and education. Furthermore, he imagines a university in the further future – not in five years, but later – where the Maya language is certified. Abel explains that they have to do it, just like Cambridge for the English language for example, or the Stanford certificate. He also imagines a

university that offers summer courses for graduates and he hopes that these things can be made come true in the future. (Tskikbal, Abel, 26.11.2013)

The following image shows a phrase written on a wall at an intercultural school in Oaxaca. The translation is "It is forbidden not to smile in the face of adversity, not to fight for what you want, to give up because of fear, not make your dreams come true." (School in Oaxaca, 2013)



*Image 3: School in Oaxaca (2013)*

This chapter focused on intercultural plurilingual education in the future. This chapter included proposals by professors and students collected during the research work carried out in Mexico for this diploma thesis. It showed that there are many suggestions and ideas for the creation of a new and different kind of school. An example of a different school where parents feel responsible for the education of their children, where children are given the freedom to choose their direction, and space to interact with different cultures in different languages.



### 13. Conclusion

This work was about Education and Interculturality in Mexico – An analysis on interculturality: *Tsikbal'ob* at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo and other parts of Mexico.

In the beginning of this work the following three research methods were explained – the *tsikbal* (conversation), the class observations and the questionnaire.

One of the research techniques used in this work was the *tsikbal*. This technique has been tested and put into practice by Maya speakers in several university theses at the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (*UIMQRoo*). Dr. Castillo Cocom mentions that it is only possible between Maya speakers or people who share the same language and belong to similar cultural groups. However, I think it is also possible to use the *tsikbal* between speakers of other languages, because it intends to overcome barriers. The *tsikbal* was used for this work to show that it is possible to use it between non-Maya speakers. I was able to establish a level of trust in the conversations with Maya-speakers and speakers of other (indigenous) languages by using the *tsikbal* in Spanish or English. In conclusion, I can say that the *tsikbal* was successful even though it was not only used between Maya speakers. The principal difficulty while using this research technique was finding and approaching suitable conversation partners. The main conversation partners were teachers at the protest camps at the Zocalo in Mexico City, officials from the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas (INALI), teachers and students in Oaxaca, officials of the education department in Merida, Yucatán, and teachers and students from the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo (*UIMQRoo*), as well as teachers from kindergartens and schools in José María Morelos, Quintana Roo.

The second research method was the observation of classes. This research method helped to understand whether the subjects at the *UIMQRoo* and at different schools were taught in an intercultural and bilingual way. The main classes observed were Educación Intercultural, Traducción e Interpretación, Derechos Humanos Indígenas, Maya and Inglés.

The observation of these classes clearly showed that the main language of instruction at the UIMQRoo is Spanish. The students can be put into three groups – Maya speakers who can read, write and speak Maya and Spanish, Maya speakers who only use the oral language, they cannot write in Maya and those learning Maya for the first time. Many teachers at the UIMQRoo are bilingual and try to use Maya and Spanish in their classes. However, there is no true bilingual education, as the level of language knowledge varies. The observation of classes also showed the attitude of the students and teachers towards indigenous languages. Many students said that their parents did not teach them Maya because they themselves had been discriminated because of being indigenous and they did not want their children to be treated in the same way. So by eliminating the language, they thought they could also eliminate the discrimination – forgetting that the language is an important part of this rich culture. The UIMQRoo encourages young people not only to learn the Maya language but also to learn more about this rich indigenous culture – medicine, farming, etc.

The last research technique used in this work is the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed for the students of the *UIMQRoo* in order to collect information about the languages they speak and their opinion about interculturality.

Then there was a focus on Mexico – a diverse and pluricultural country. This chapter included the geographical situation, states and population of Mexico. Furthermore the indigenous languages and peoples were listed and explained in this chapter. Then the state of Quintana Roo was presented, as the research work concentrated mainly on this state.

Chapter five focused on the bilingual intercultural education. It started off with a definition of bilingual intercultural education, and then the history of bilingual intercultural education was outlined. The purpose and goals of bilingual intercultural education were presented and discussed, as well as the effectiveness of bilingual education.

The main chapter of this diploma thesis was chapter six – Education in Mexico from Preschool to University. This chapter started off with the educational reform in Mexico and then moved on to the results of the questionnaire and tsikbal regarding education in

Mexico. The results of the observation of classes, interviews and questionnaires clearly show that there is no true bilingual education. Many students speak Maya at home, but Maya is not taught as a first language at school. The majority of the students said that the main instruction language at school and university is Spanish. Maya is not taught as a mother tongue and not used as an instruction language, except for very young pupils who do not speak Spanish. Then Maya is used to teach them different subjects, but as soon as they speak Spanish, the instruction language changes from Maya to Spanish.

The UIMQRoo gives young people from rural, poorer areas of México the chance to study a career and later earn their own money to sustain their family. Without this university in this rural area, it would be more difficult for young people to access university. They would have to travel longer distances, it would be more expensive and especially young women would not have the chance at all to study, because they have children to care for at home. At the UIMQRoo I met young women who were able to study at university although they already had a child or more children. Their family supported them and looked after the babies while they went to their classes in the morning or afternoon. The UIMQRoo definitely opens up doors and possibilities for young people in rural areas.

CONAFE also gives young students the possibility to study even though their parents cannot afford to pay for the tuition fees. It happens very often that parents cannot afford to send their children to school, not even thinking about university. So, with CONAFE students from rural, poorer areas have the possibility to learn and make a difference, because small changes make big impacts.

The *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indigenas* is the National Institute for Indigenous Languages. One of the first conversations carried out in Mexico was at this institute. I was able to collect a lot of information about the indigenous languages and programmes for promoting indigenous cultures in Mexico during this conversation. I also received teaching material and posters from INALI, which were helpful for this work.

The Translation and Interpretation of Indigenous Languages was analysed in this work. There are translators and interpreters for indigenous languages; however, there is still great

potential for the improvement of the training and the working areas for these translators and interpreters. At the UIMQRoo there are interpreting booths, however, there is no interpreting teacher. During my stay at the UIMQRoo, I showed the students how to use the interpreting equipment and we had an introduction class about interpreting. Then the students had the possibility to try out the interpreting. They interpreted from English to Spanish, Spanish to English, Maya to Spanish and Spanish to Maya. I encouraged the teacher and the students to continue these classes or have some workshops, because they were very interested in the interpreting studies. There is great potential at the UIMQRoo for improving the translating and interpreting studies for Spanish, Maya and English.

One of the first classes I visited at the UIMQRoo was Indigenous Human Rights. This was important for me to understand how the students see themselves and how they see the terms 'indigenous' and 'Maya'. The main questions I asked myself are which of these words are seen as politically correct and which terms do the indigenous people of Mexico use to define themselves? I found out that many persons do not like being called indigenous, because this word is often connected with discrimination. So I chose the word 'indigenous' to describe the native languages and cultures in this work. The chapter on Indigenous Human Rights described the different laws that especially protect indigenous languages and cultures in Mexico.

This then led to the next chapter, namely the Meaning of Interculturality, which included the results of questionnaires and conversations. The results of the questionnaires show that the majority of the students use the term culture in the definition of interculturality. The majority of the students questioned, define interculturality by using positive words. Only two out of sixty-one students questioned, claim that interculturality does not exist. However, none of the students define interculturality as something negative.

In my opinion interculturality means living together with persons from different cultures, these cultures interact, mix and enrich each other. The persons from these different cultures live together in respect, tolerance and interaction.

However, there is still a great struggle for interculturality and the term interculturality is often also seen in a critical way. Bartomeo Meliá (2012) describes interculturality as a nice word, but a great parody and a big lie. In my opinion interculturality does seem to have become a nice word to use, but there is definitely an important meaning behind it and therefore I am in favour of using the word interculturality and putting it into practice in our everyday lives.

The research work carried out in Mexico allowed a general overview of the history and the development of intercultural education in Mexico. A vast majority of information was collected about programmes and projects being carried out nowadays to improve the educational system.

Without the research work conducted in Mexico, with a focus on the Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo, this diploma thesis would have turned out differently. The research work in Mexico enhanced the results and findings.

One of the main questions of the conclusion is whether there is a true bilingual intercultural education in Mexico?

In my opinion intercultural bilingual education in Mexico is a myth because there is no true bilingualism. Unfortunately, indigenous persons have been repeatedly discriminated in history. There is a strong movement towards revitalising indigenous languages and cultures in Mexico, however this is a long process and just introducing new laws and initiatives does not do the work. The indigenous languages and cultures have to receive more importance in the long term. This can only be achieved by introducing bilingual intercultural education throughout the whole education system. Native speakers of indigenous languages have to be encouraged to pass on their native language and culture to their children and they should not be ashamed or scared of speaking their native language. So the first step is to encourage bilingual education at home and then to strengthen the bilingual intercultural education at school – from preschool to university. If young people start learning the indigenous languages at a young age, by the time they reach university, the language can be taught at a higher level. This way the language can

further develop and the prestige of the indigenous languages will automatically be strengthened.

A further question is whether a society in which all participants are included can exist in the future. In my opinion this can be achieved, however, there is still a long way to go.

Is the bilingual intercultural educational model accepted in society? I feel the creation of the UIMQRoo was an important step towards the revaluation of indigenous languages. There is definitely great potential to improve the bilingual intercultural educational model. There are many good approaches and programmes which are being accepted by many indigenous and non-indigenous persons throughout Mexico. Therefore, I think that in the future the bilingual intercultural educational model will become more and more accepted in society and even adapted in other countries.

### **Research questions**

How is interculturality understood in Mexico and how is the idea of interculturality put into practice at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo*?

The questionnaires and conversations (*tsikbal'ob*) showed that interculturality is mainly understood as a positive word and positive development. There are subjects such as Intercultural Education at the UIMQRoo. However, there is no subject named only Interculturality, it has to be included in everyday life and in all the different subjects. Some teachers organise their classes in an intercultural way and encourage their students to speak Spanish and Maya.

### **Specific questions**

What do the professors and students think about interculturality and how do they practice it? How does the education in indigenous languages work in Mexico?

This research question was answered by carrying out conversations and questionnaires. The results show that the majority of the students at the UIMQRoo define interculturality

as something positive. They use words such as respect, tolerance, equality, interaction, learning, co-existence, enrich, knowledge and living together to define interculturality. Only two out of sixty-one students questioned claim that interculturality does not exist. However, none of the students defines interculturality as something negative.

Professors did not fill out questionnaires, but answered the question within the conversations. They describe interculturality as a daily practice. In their opinion interculturality can exist if we open up towards other cultures. However, it is not always so easy to implement interculturality in our daily lives.

During the research work at the *Universidad Intercultural Maya de Quintana Roo* I realised that intercultural bilingual education did not exist in the way I had imagined it. It was difficult to find schools in which Maya and Spanish were taught in a bilingual way. There were two kindergartens in José María Morelos where the teachers taught some Maya to the children, but the observation of classes, interviews and questionnaires carried out in José María Morelos showed clearly that schooling was mainly in Spanish.

Many students from the *UIMQRoo* explained that they learned Maya at home, but when they started school they were taught in Spanish. In most of the cases Spanish was the only language used at school. On the other hand, professors and students told about the indigenous education in some communities where Maya is used in the first years of school. However, Maya is only used because the children of these communities do not know Spanish, so the first years of school the teachers have to speak Maya to the children in order to explain things to them. However, as soon as the children learn Spanish, the teaching language changes to Spanish. The pupils never learn to read or write in Maya, only in Spanish. So many students at the *UIMQRoo* understand and speak Maya because it is their mother tongue or because their parents or grandparents speak it, but never learned how to read or write in Maya. Students explained that when they started university, it was the first time for them to learn how to read and write in Maya. There is no subject called Maya at school.

In the conversations with teachers and students, they explained that many indigenous persons are ashamed of their origins. The languages and cultures are being forgotten because they criticise, discriminate their own people.

I carried out this research work at the UIMQRoo because I was interested to see an Intercultural University and learn more about the intercultural bilingual education in Mexico. I realised that many students did not speak Maya, although it was an intercultural university Maya. Most of the students learned Maya at university. The students explained that they do not know Maya very well, so they prefer becoming English teachers.

In my opinion the children in indigneous and non-indigenous regions have to be encouraged at home and at school to speak their native language and learn other languages. Many prefer learning English because they then have better chances finding a good job. However, learning their native language and Spanish first, does not mean that they cannot learn English as well. Children are like sponges; they absorb everything very fast and easily. The parents also play an important role; they have to be included in the education of their children. Then the pupils can easily learn three languages and profit from this mulitlingualism and interculturality.

This work helps to understand interculturality and education in Mexico. In my opinion interculturality is an everyday practice, which we should implement in our lives. We can learn many things from indigenous persons and these rich languages and cultures should not be forgotten or disappear. It is important to value these cultures and languages.



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