What’s in a label?

Acknowledging linguistic diversity

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How many languages are there in the world?

Hard to tell but...
There are more than 7,000 languages around the world!

Oral and sign languages
Indicative of the tremendous cultural diversity of human kind!

The labels we use can obscure diversity.

In this talk
- Review homogenizing labels used in daily discourse in the United States
- Reveal linguistic diversity

Will use the terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “Spanish” to make my argument
- Will center on the use of these terms in the US Census
- Will show a couple of other examples to extend to other labels
Homogenizing labels

US Census 2020

Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

NOTE: Please answer both Question 8 about Hispanic origin and Question 9 about race. For this census, Hispanic origins are not races. Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before arriving in the United States. People who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be any race.
Homogenizing labels
US Census 2020

Why we ask this question: These responses help create statistics about this ethnic group. This helps federal agencies monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.
The terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “Spanish”

- Used interchangeably.
- Some respondents identify with all three terms, while others may identify with only one.
- People who identify with the terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” or “Spanish” are
  - those who classify themselves in one of the specific Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish categories listed on the questionnaire (“Mexican,” “Puerto Rican,” or “Cuban”)
  - as well as those who indicate that they are “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.”
    - from Spain, the **Spanish-speaking countries** of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic.

- Source: TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION:2010 Census Summary File 1
Diversity within “this ethnic group”

Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish

- What languages do people in Spain use?
Diversity within “this ethnic group”
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish

Diversity within “this ethnic group”
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish categories listed on the questionnaire (“Mexican,” “Puerto Rican,” or “Cuban”)

11 Amerindian language families

I Álgica.
II Yuto-nahua.
III Cochimí-yumana.
IV Seri.
V Oto-mangue.
VI Maya.
VII Totonaco-tepehua.
VIII Tarasca.
IX Mixe-zoque.
X Chontal de Oaxaca.
XI Huave.

Mexico data: 68 language groups

"La categoría agrupación lingüística ocupa el lugar intermedio en los niveles de catalogación aplicados aquí. Se define como el conjunto de variantes lingüísticas comprendidas bajo el nombre dado históricamente a un pueblo indígena."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Akateko</th>
<th>Cuicateco</th>
<th>Lacandón</th>
<th>Pápago</th>
<th>Tepehuano del sur</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amuzgo</td>
<td>Guarijío</td>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>Pima</td>
<td>Texistepequeño</td>
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<td>Huasteco</td>
<td>Matlatzinca</td>
<td>Popoloca</td>
<td>Tlahuica</td>
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<td>Ayapaneco</td>
<td>Huave</td>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Popoluca de la Sierra</td>
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<td>Huichol</td>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>Q'anjob'al</td>
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<td>Ixcateco</td>
<td>Mazahua</td>
<td>Q'eqchi'</td>
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<td>Tsotsil</td>
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<td>Náhuatl</td>
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<td>Yaqui</td>
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<td>Kickapoo</td>
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<td>Tarasco</td>
<td>Zapoteco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chuj</td>
<td>Kiliwa</td>
<td>Otomí</td>
<td>Teko</td>
<td>Zoque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Ku'ahl</td>
<td>Paipai</td>
<td>Tepehua</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucapá</td>
<td>Kumiai</td>
<td>Pame</td>
<td>Tepehuano del norte</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zapotec

Unknown number of distinct languages

Source: Campbell 2017
Zapotec

Glottolog: 58 languages...and counting

“another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.”

- “...the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic.”
- South America is the world’s region with the greatest genetic diversity in languages
  - number of language families (see Campbell and Grondona 2012).

Obscured diversity

Why we ask this question: These responses help create statistics about this ethnic group. This helps federal agencies monitor compliance with anti-discrimination provisions, such as those in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act.

- Mexico, Central and South America combined are home to about a third of the world’s language families
  - 420 language families (including isolates) in the world (Campbell 2012; Hammarstrom 2010)
  - \( \frac{420}{3} = 140 \) language families!

- Probably around 1000 languages! (Pérez Báez et al. 2016)
  - Over 360 in Mexico
  - Over 50 in Central America and the Caribbean
  - Over 400 in South America
What is Person 1's race?

Mark one or more boxes AND print origins: White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Chinese; Filipino; Asian Indian; Vietnamese; Korean; Japanese; other Asian; Native Hawaiian; Samoan; Chamorro; other Pacific Islander; some other race.
Homogenizing labels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US Census 2020 labels</th>
<th>Associated languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>Around 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese;</td>
<td>Around 330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino;</td>
<td>Over 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>Around 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Over 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other Asian</td>
<td>!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- US Census 2000 label “African languages”
  - Glottolog: Over 2300 languages!
Why does this all matter?

Speakers of one of 1000 Indigenous Latin American languages could be in YOUR classroom, medical clinic, law practice, work place, neighborhood, etc.
They may be overshadowed or misunderstood by the terms “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “Spanish”
- Children may be sent to special education if misunderstood as native Spanish speakers

All of these languages are endangered!
- (Except Spanish)
- Pressure to speak Spanish due to the labels “Hispanic,” “Latino,” and “Spanish” heavily contributes towards trends to shift away from the Indigenous languages
What can you do to support diversity awareness?
Foster awareness!

- Foster an environment that values languages other than dominant languages
  - Break away from homogenizing labels!

- Foster a dialogue that allows individuals and communities to open up about their backgrounds and the languages they use
Become informed!

- Explore the world’s diversity and its manifestation in your community

- Some resources
  - Glottolog:
    - https://glottolog.org/
  - Native Land:
    - https://native-land.ca/
  - Survey of California and other Indian Languages
    - http://cla.berkeley.edu/
  - UNESCO
    - https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/motherlanguageday
  - Endangered Languages Project
    - http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/
thank you