



I am pleased to present to interpreters service Providers the second part of the article on the Maya Project regarding Language.

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LANGUAGE:

The Maya speak native languages that have existed in the Americas for thousands of years, and these Maya languages remain the primary language for millions of people in Guatemala, Belize, and southern Mexico. “Maya” itself is a family of languages, about 30 of them continue to be spoken in the modern day. Most Maya live in the nation-state of Guatemala, which has over 20 Maya languages and about 50 dialects. [Sometimes disagreement emerges over whether or not to categorize a particular speech as a complete language or a dialect within a language] Maya languages are generally mutually unintelligible. Some Maya understand and speak a special Spanish language called “la castilla”, a non-standard Spanish. Those who arrive in the United States might appear Hispanic or Latino to the normal observer, but the Maya might not speak Spanish, or they might speak Spanish at a lower skill level than often expected. Many will not read or write in any language. The language barrier often goes unnoticed and can have negative consequences because providers believe they are conveying information appropriately through a Spanish interpreter or Spanish-language materials.



Alan LeBaron, the author of this article.