

# **The impact of Spanish on Otomí and the language use of its native speakers: a case study of an asymmetrical language contact situation on the highlands of Central Mexico**

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Otomí was the native language of the original inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico and the surrounding valleys. Throughout history Otomí speakers had to confront newcomers such as the Aztecs, Spaniards and Mestizos, speakers of Nahuatl and Spanish.

In this contribution to *Language Empires in Comparative Perspective* the asymmetric contact between Otomí and Spanish will be discussed. First a description will be given of the historical, social and political circumstances during this contact, paying special attention to the language policy implemented by the Spaniards during the colonial period and by the ruling Mexican elite after the Independence (Lastra 2006). Next, the results of this contact will be given, showing to what extent the lexicon, syntax, morphology and phonology of Otomí have been influenced and affected by Spanish, how language shift has been triggered off and also how a new Spanish ethnolect has arisen (Hekking & Bakker 2007).

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