

conceived of as an associative network, the links between word forms and meanings could have varying degrees of associative strength, and the strict dichotomy between homonymy and polysemy might possibly have to be replaced by a multivalued scale. At the same time, the methodological emphasis would shift from the 'criteria for homonymy' issue towards the question of what kinds of evidence (for instance, through psycholinguistic experimentation) could be used to determine these associative strengths.

All in all, the traditional concept of homonymy appears to be in need of further clarification. On the one hand, the usual criteria are operationally not entirely satisfactory, but on the other hand, the concept itself is important to the extent that it involves the definition of the notion 'lexical item' itself.

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Honduras: Language Situation

The Republic of Honduras is the great crossroads of North American, Meso-American, and South American languages. Speakers of the Hokan language Tol (more commonly known as Jicaque) number 8,000, inhabiting the area of Montaña de la Flor and elsewhere. Many adult males, especially the community leaders, can also speak Spanish. Some 2,000 Chortí Mayan live on the Honduras side of the Guatemalan border near the Maya ruins at Copán. Spanish bilingualism is well advanced, but Chortí continues to be spoken in the home and local community. Church-sponsored literacy programs for the Guatemalan Chortí serve their Honduran cousins as well, for the international border is freely traversed.

Languages from various branches of Macro-Chibchan (a South American family) are Lenca, Pesch (or Pech, also known as Paya), Sumu (Sumo), and Miskitu (Miskito). Lenca is no longer a living language of communication. Remaining Lenca speakers may be found in the departments of La Paz, Intibucá, Lempira, Comayagua, and Santa Bárbara; however, they are old and normally speak Spanish. On the other hand, Pesch speakers in the departments of Olancho, Colón, and Gracias a Dios have been actively working to maintain their language and other aspects of their culture. Because of their settlement and commercial circumstances, most of the 1,800 Pesch speakers are bilingual in Spanish; some also speak Sumu. However, there is speculation that the small group of 'pure' Pesch on the river Platano in the department of Gracias a Dios will be insulated and protected by their having been incorporated into a UNESCO Biosphere and World Heritage Site. The Contra wars affected the distribution of Sumu and Miskitu speakers, whose lands straddle the border between Honduras and Nicaragua. The prewar population of 300 Sumu on the middle Patuca river has since been augmented by 3,000 Sumu immigrants from Nicaragua.

Similar Miskitu migration has quadrupled the prewar population of 10,000.

Spanish is the language of government and the national lingua franca. The Spanish of Honduras has more Caribbean features than does any other Central American country except Panama. In particular, the loss of final *s* is somewhat advanced. On the other hand, many Hondureños have a conservative Central American speech pattern similar to that of El Salvador or of western Nicaragua. Several Spanish-language daily newspapers are published, and the Spanish literacy rate is comparable to that of El Salvador. Private radio networks and television stations broadcast local and pan-American Spanish language programming.

Roatán and the other Bay Islands, as well as the northern coast of the mainland, are home to 70,000 Garifuna speakers. Well-known as sojourners of the Caribbean, this population maintains contact with communities in Belize, Guatemala, and elsewhere. Many of the males who travel for work speak English as well as Spanish.

The Bay Islands are also home to 11,000 first-language English-speakers. For the most part buccaneers' descendants who have intermittently proclaimed their allegiance to the UK, they recognize British English as their standard, although their speech has some features common to West Caribbean Creole English. There are English-language theatrical productions and radio broadcasts.

See also: Pidgins and Creoles.

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