

I heard it on the radio: indigenous language radio and political activism

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Two cases of the use of radio by indigenous peoples in the Americas will be discussed. The first one is the Shuar (Upper Amazon, Ecuador, 55,000 people), where one of the earliest indigenous radio services in the Americas was established from the late 1960s. That radio service played an outstandingly important role in Shuar political, cultural, educational and linguistic awareness. During the last decade, the neighbouring Achuar (a cultural-linguistic minority, compared to the Shuar) also started to operate their own radio station, aiming mostly to counteract the overwhelming Shuar influence on their own culture and language. Another much more recent case is that of the Huave (Southern Mexico) radio service in San Mateo (9,000 speakers), which has been active for a few years only (until two months ago). This has been enough to trigger a new shared attitude of linguistic creativity and, possibly, even recent demands for language “revitalization” in other Huave pueblos, where local linguistic varieties are obsolescent. In both the Shuar and the Huave cases, radio broadcasting has stimulated new forms of linguistic creativity.