

**UNESCO Chair on World Language Heritage, University of the Basque Country**  
**Windows to the world languages**

**LANGUAGE: MAPUDUNGUN**

Names given by the speakers themselves: Mapudungun, Mapunzungun, Mapuzungun (*the language of the land*), Mapuchedungun, Mapuchezungun (*the language of the Mapuche*), Chedungun and Tsezungun (*the language of the people*).

Other names used: Mapuche (especially in Spanish), Araucan.

**TERRITORY AND SPEAKERS**

*Mapudungun* is the language of the Mapuche people. *Mapudungun* is the term most often used internationally to identify that language; it means *the language of the land*. Therefore *Mapudungun* is the name of the language and Mapuche is the name given to a member of the tribe. The Mapuche live in Chile and Argentina. They are 900.000 in total, with more than 600.000 of them living in Chile (according to the 2002 census) (Wittig, 2007; Sánchez, 2007).

In Argentina, the Mapuche are found in Neuquén, Río Negro, La Pampa, Chabute and Buenos Aires. The original territory of the Chilean Mapuches is what today is known as bio-Bio, bordered by Araucania and Los Lagos territory but today a great number of Mapuche live in Santiago. In fact, as much as 62% of the Chilean Mapuche live in the cities of Santiago and Temuco (Wittig, 2007; Sánchez, 2007).



Source: Uranga *et al.*, 2007.

Out of the Mapuche that live in Argentina, only about 40.000 speak *Mapudungun*. In Chile the number of speakers is 50.000, although there is another 120.000 who are “passive speakers”, that is, people who can understand but not speak the language.

Most of the speakers of *Mapudungun* are bilingual and also speak Spanish. Very few of them are monolingual, and these are of the older generation. Language transmission is quickly being lost, and the number of young people who speak the language is decreasing rapidly.

**SITUATION OF THE LANGUAGE**

*Mapudungun* is not an official language either in Chile or in Argentina, and the leaders of those countries do very little to promote the language. An Indigenous Law in defence

of the languages was passed in Chile in 1993, but it is merely symbolic. A Bilingual Teaching Program was started in 1996, but its implementation has been slow and non-systematic. What is more, in this programme *Mapudungun* is taught for no more than a few hours at school, and only to Mapuche children, not to all the children. In any case, the programme is not widely spread.

There is an ongoing process of ethnic-identity reinterpretation among the Mapuche, especially in the cities. Among other things, they promote the learning, use and spread of their language through non-traditional methods, such as literary creation, radio, language teaching and journalism.

With regard to literary production, the best known is the one produced by new poets, but only a few of them speak *Mapudungun* and are able to write in this language; many write only in Spanish. As for media production, the best known is the weekly magazine *Azkintuwe* ([www.azkintuwe.org](http://www.azkintuwe.org)), which is written in both languages; the Wallon radio station is also bilingual. Apparently, the presence of *Mapudungun* is becoming more common in this kind of media, but still Spanish is the main language due to the fact that urban Mapuche have lost their language to a great extent.

According to Würm (2001), the *Mapudungun* language is in danger of disappearing, with the following clear signs: there are no child speakers in Argentina; it is mostly spoken by women who did not leave the reservation in search of a job outside; and, among the speakers, whilst some have perfect command of the language, many other just have passive language competence and therefore can understand it, but cannot communicate in it.

On the other hand, *Mapudungun* does not have a standard form yet, even though work is being done in this area and different proposals have been put forward.

## CLASIFICACION OF THE LANGUAGE

*Mapudungun* is an Amerindian language of the Araucanian family. As it is the only surviving language of this language group, it can be considered an isolated language.

*Mapudungun* has many dialects and variants. The most spread out dialects are Pikunche or Picunche (spoken in the north), Moluche or Ngoluche (in the west), Lafkenche or Lafquenche (spoken in the seaside). Pehuenche (spoken around the Andes region) and Willeche or Huilliche (spoken in the south). However, these dialects have little differences between them and speakers can understand each other.

## FEATURES OF THE LANGUAGE

*Mapudungun* is an agglutinating, polysynthetic language with noun incorporation, so it tends to use suffixes (Sánchez 2007). Thus, sentences are formed through the insertion of morphemes into the basic lexical units.

tunten tripantü      nieymi?  
How many years you have  
*How old are you?*

iney ñi              ruka tūfa?  
who GENITIVE house this  
*Whose house is this?*

nien (*to have*)  
iñche nien      *I have*  
eymi nieymi    *you have*

fey niey        *that one has*

iñchiu nieyu    *we both have*  
eymu nieymu    *you both have*  
feyegu nieygu    *they both have*

iñchiñ nieyiñ        *we have*  
eymün nieymün        *you (plural) have*  
feyegün neygün        *they have*

## GLOSSARY

sero, kiñe, epu, küla, meli, kechu, kayu, regle, pura, aylla, mari, marikiñe  
0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

chao/chaw, chedki, chedki/cheshki, choküm, chuchu, domo chedki/cheshki, domo laku, fotüm, kure, laku, lamngen, malle, müna, ñuke, ñukentu, palu, peñi, weku, chedki/cheche, fütä, kuku,  
*father, mother's father, daughter's son, sister's daughter/son, mother's mother, daughter's daughter, son's daughter, father's son, wife, son's son/father's father, mother's sister's daughter/brother/sister, father's brother, father's sister's son, mother, mother's sister/mother's brother's daughter, father's sister, brother/mother's sister's son, mother's brother, mother's father, husband, father's mother,*

ruka, sekül, iyael, ütantu/ngütantu, ange, nge, pilun, wün, yu, namun, küwü  
*house, cradle, meal, bed, face, eye, hear, mouth, nose, foot, hand*

Iturria: Hernández *et al.*, 2007.

## WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE

*¿Kimi kay chew ñi tripan tati pu ngen?*

Fey chi dewmangelu ta mapu, fütachachay ka ñukepapay kom ñi dewmael ñi epu küwü mew. Kake kiñeke chemkün elngey (mawida , wingkul, lelfün mew fey ka elkünungey ti ngen. Fey ti ngen fey ta ngünechen ñi kona reke feley. Fey mew müleyey tati kintuñmakelu ta wingkul (ngen wingkul) fey ti ko mew (ngen ko), fey ti kürüf (ngen kürüf) fey ti kütral mew (ngen kütral), fey ti mapu mew (ngen Mapu). Fey ka dewmangey ta wentru fey elngey nageltu ka dewmangey ta domo ka elngey nageltu mapu mew...

Fütachachay ka Ñukepapay elkünuyey kiñe ngen kake kiñeke ti müleyelu mew ( wingkul, Lewfu, etc). Femngechi kake kiñeke ti müleyelu ñi afnoal. Fey ngenole ta ngen, fey ti wüfko angküafuy, ka ti kürüf tripawalayafuy, fey i mawida afafuy, fey ti wingkul lürnagtuafuy, fey mapu kom lürkületuafuy fey ti küra trirakawafuy. Fey femngechi, mapu ta aftuarfuy. Feyngen eluniefi newen kom tüfey chi müleyelu mapu mew kake kiñeke ti mülelu eluniefi reke ta mongen, fey chi mongen eluniefew rumel ñi mongentuleal. Wingkadungun.

*Do you remember the origin of the ngen?*

When they made the world, Futachachay and Ñukepapay made everything with their own hands. They put everything in its place and they left a ngen in everything. The ngen was the god's caretaker. Thus appeared the caretakers-owners of the mountain (ngenwinkul), of the water (ngenko), of the native forest (ngen mawida), of the stone (ngenkura), of the wind (ngen kuruf), of the fire (ngenkütral), of the land (ngen mapu). Then they made the man and they sent him down; they made the woman and sent her down.

Futachachay and Ñukepapay have put a ngen in each thing so that that element does not end. Without its ngen, the water would dry out, the wind would not blow, the forest would be wasted, the hill would fall down, the land would level, the stone would break. And in this way the Earth would disappear. The ngen gives life to these things, to every existing thing. That life makes it continue living forever.

Manuel Loncomil Coñuenao

### USEFUL LINKS

<http://www.mapuche.info/>

[www.azkintuwe.org](http://www.azkintuwe.org)

[www.serindigena.org/jump/jump.cgi?otrosur.tripod.com/a.htm](http://www.serindigena.org/jump/jump.cgi?otrosur.tripod.com/a.htm)

[http://es.wikibooks.org/wiki/mapudungun/Lecci%C3%B3n\\_2-Chum%C3%BCI\\_akuymi%3F](http://es.wikibooks.org/wiki/mapudungun/Lecci%C3%B3n_2-Chum%C3%BCI_akuymi%3F)

[www.cepchile.cl](http://www.cepchile.cl)

[http://www.aulainter-cultural.org/breve.php3?id\\_breve=442](http://www.aulainter-cultural.org/breve.php3?id_breve=442)

### REFERENCES

Hernández, Arturo, Ramos, Nelly and Cárcamo, Carlos (2007) *Mapuche. Lengua y cultura. Diccionario mapudungun – español – inglés*. Santiago: Pehuen – Universidad Católica de Temuco.

Sánchez, C. Gilberto (2007) Txileko hizkuntza aniztasuna. Uranga, Belen, Barreña, Andoni, Idiazabal, Itziar, Amorrortu, Estibaliz, Ortega, Ane and Izagirre, Estibaliz (eds.) (2007) *Amerikako hizkuntza aniztasuna. Mexikotik Hego Konoraino – La diversidad lingüística de América. De México al Cono Sur*. Donostia: Erein, 67-68.

Uranga, Belen, Barreña, Andoni, Idiazabal, Itziar, Amorrortu, Estibaliz, Ortega, Ane and Izagirre, Estibaliz (eds.) (2007) *Amerikako hizkuntza aniztasuna. Mexikotik Hego Konoraino – La diversidad lingüística de América. De México al Cono Sur*. Donostia: Erein.

Wittig, Fernando (2007) Mapudunguna. Uranga, Belen, Barreña, Andoni, Idiazabal, Itziar, Amorrortu, Estibaliz, Ortega, Ane and Izagirre, Estibaliz (eds.) (2007) *Amerikako hizkuntza aniztasuna. Mexikotik Hego Konoraino – La diversidad lingüística de América. De México al Cono Sur*. Donostia: Erein, 69.

Würm, S. A. (ed.) (2001) *Atlas of the World's languages in danger of disappearing*. Paris: UNESCO.