

The Valuation System of the Quechua in Peru

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The Quechua language in Peru continues to decrease in prevalence and importance at the risk of Quechua cultural and ancestral values. This occurs because of the economic and social benefits perceived from speaking Spanish. This paper analyzes the role and influence of families, communities, the economy, the government and nongovernmental organizations in perpetuating the prevalence and preference of Spanish over the Quechua language. Factors such as language formalization, cultural values and social power affect the teaching and understanding of Quechua, thereby influencing the preservation of values embedded within the language itself. One must understand these factors in order to address not only the educational deficiencies that exist but also the valuation and preservation of the Quechua language and culture itself.

There are over ten million speakers of Quechua, an indigenous language commonly spoken in the mountainous Andes of South America. Despite this, the language and its speakers have been experiencing social, political, and economic difficulties for years. The conflicts that arise encompass not only the indigenous communities themselves, but also the nation states within which they reside. As such, national policies, non-governmental organizations, and the Quechua populations have attempted to alleviate some of the pressures of language acquisition, both of Spanish and Quechua, through educational programs and amendments. Unfortunately, these actions have not only had some benefits, such as bringing attention to the indigenous communities, but have also created cultural questions and conflicts that continue to arise regarding cultural preservation through language educational programs, the needs of the people in relation to the government's educational policies, and the formalization of a language that had always been an informal part of life.

When looking at the topic of language acquisition in Quechua communities, it is important to understand why the preservation of the language and culture is worth studying. A culture's language

does more than simply provide a mode of communication. It also provides a way in which the values of and perspectives on life can be passed from one generation to the next. As global linguist Greg Anderson reported, "Languages are rich in the history and taxonomy of a place ... reflecting subtleties that can be lost in translation. When the last keepers of a language die off, so does the fluent understanding of that particular environment."¹ Within Quechua populations, Spanish is replacing Quechua as the dominant language in the younger generations, leaving the elders to feel as though their progeny are losing their culture's values and ancestral understanding. Meanwhile, Spanish is replacing the language that once worked as a *lingua franca* before and after the Incan empire. *Lingua franca*, as defined by UNESCO, is a "language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them."² Spanish is rapidly gaining prominence and importance within Quechua populations as Quechua individuals and communities choose to communicate in Spanish rather than practicing the fading language of Quechua.

¹ "Saving Dying Languages in 'the Linguists'", 2009

² King and Hornberger, 1996, p. 177

As language preservation and education has become a more prominent issue in most countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have attempted to assist with lessening the distance and the differences between Quechua and Spanish speakers. One such way these organizations have sought to do this is by offering bilingual educational systems that teach young Quechua children Spanish. These systems, however, have encountered difficulties translating and passing on the cultural norms that would otherwise be an inherent part of language education from one's parents and daily activities. In addition, the resources available to provide educated teachers, suitable locations, and economic benefits to go to school only increase the difficulty of the situation. In effect, the goals of some NGOs to help improve the economic situation of Quechua communities through language acquisition have come in conflict with the preservation of the culture. Due to the lack of understanding the NGOs have of the values transmitted within the languages they teach, they can oftentimes add to the potential and continual loss of a language.

While this paper will focus predominantly on Quechua speakers, the difficulty of language loss is not isolated to Quechua-speaking communities. It is a conflict that exists around the world as indigenous communities must find ways in which to preserve their heritage while also remaining economically successful and productive in the ever-changing world. The language they speak can be essential to the political weight of their words and their work. The tongue or tongues they choose to teach and learn can affect their social standing or the perceptions of their social and economic classes. The solutions to these issues are neither simple nor quickly implementable. Solutions to assist in such situations must be malleable enough to allow the advancement and growth of each culture and people without forgetting the values and history of the culture's past. Generally, it is not the goal to freeze a culture or a people in the time and traditions of their ancestors but rather to preserve and to understand the importance of the past to the present and future. In this, the power of language becomes ever more apparent and necessary, revealing the capacity each language has to communicate across generations the values and norms of one's ancestry and cultural perspectives.

Education, therefore, is not simply a formulation of systematic principles to be executed by any who wish to learn the system, but instead becomes a responsibility to inculcate the norms and values of both current and past societies. The curriculum that may seem explicit and straightforward in education and educational systems is then flooded with implicit ideals and goals that must be recognized explicitly by educators and community members for the power and affect they have on youth and societal development.

In order to further study and analyze the current situation of Quechua preservation, revitalization, and education in Peru, this paper will analyze the societal, economic, and political values within the languages and perceptions of Peruvian society. Understanding and identifying the values and the social factors alive within the society and the people of Peru will then allow for a better understanding of the variables at work in preserving or dictating a language in order to save a culture. As stated previously, this situation is neither simple nor easily resolved. It involves many social stigmas and has been developing for years; these processes must first be reversed in order to see an improvement in the valuation of Quechua within Peru, both by non-Quechua residents and Quechua descendants alike. In order to continue searching for solutions, then, this paper seeks to provide a baseline of understanding of the current situation and the social factors influencing the lives and tongues of today's Peruvian society.

Historical Analysis

In order to understand the present situation of the Quechua language, Quechua education and Quechua's presence within Peruvian society today, it is essential that one knows the history behind the treatment of Quechua over the course of the country's development. Although Quechua was considered to be the official language of the whole of the Incan Empire, it has become devalued and has rapidly decreased in use within Peruvian society today. As such, many consider the language at the risk of extinction. How did the official language of the Incas become a language filled with social tensions and on the verge of linguistic destruction?

To begin, it is important to see that Quechua has always been a language of diverse groups of

people. During the time and expansion of the Incan Empire, the land under the rule of the Incan government spread from Bolivia to Argentina, including the Andean regions of Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Colombia, and centered around the Incan capital, the Cusco area in Peru. Within this large expanse of land, language and communities varied greatly making it difficult for the Incan government officials and traders to communicate and conduct business amidst such a multitude of languages and cultures. Thus, it would have been nearly impossible for one to learn all of the tongues of the Incan Empire.³

In order to standardize a multilingual empire, Cuzco Quechua became the official language of the land under a period of reorganization between 1430 and 1532, which spurred the region's first official decree for bilingual education. This is not to say, though, that schools were erected in mass to educate everyone in the empire to learn Quechua. Instead, a less explicit form of education took place in the courts of the Incan government. Young lords would live at the courts, taking in the Quechua language by simply living among it in their youth. As Cerrón-Palomino points out, "After more than five centuries of expansion and divergence into different dialects, [Quechua] was to achieve true interregional status through one of its dialectal forms transmitted by the Lords of Chinchá"⁴ The policy was stated that "under threat of serious punishment, any native of the empire should understand and know the language of Cuzco, both males and females, and so that even babies might begin to learn the language they ought to speak, even before leaving their mothers' breasts."^{6,7} Although this policy threatened punishment for not learning Quechua, the reality of the situation was much different. Rather than taking on the impossible goal of having every person of the empire learn and speak Quechua, the language became one of governmental officials and

tradesmen, who simply learned informally in the courts and through daily work. In fact, Hornberger and King explain that the spread of the language was most likely due to the "forced relocation of conquered peoples."⁸ This meant that as the empire conquered new land, subjects loyal to the empire would go forth to teach and use the language in the newly acquired community, thereby effectively extending the use of Quechua beyond the strict reaches of the capital.

Although the conquest of new lands by the Incan rulers remained relatively peaceful, the volatility of the situation once the official language was in place could be very high because tensions might arise over the possible devaluation, or extinction of, other languages upon the institution of Cuzco Quechua. Instead, Quechua became a unifying force among the multiple communities within the Incan Empire, permitting communication and trade to succeed between cultures with different languages. This plurilinguistic acceptance of the variety of people, cultures, and languages within the Incan lands meant that the majority of people were affected very little by the official governmental policy, since most of them did not have access to government positions or interact on a level of trade that required learning Quechua. This is not to say that the status of Quechua, specifically Cuzco Quechua, did not change because of the policies. In fact, Quechua became the operating language of the empire, even recognized by the Spanish when they first arrived as a language that had the ability to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers within the Incan Empire.

Upon the arrival of the Spanish and throughout the colonization process, Quechua became the language used to cross the boundaries between the Spanish and native cultures. However, rather than allowing for and encouraging the maintenance of Quechua and other native languages such as Aymara, Puchina or Moquica, the Spanish generally refused to learn Quechua themselves, instead depending on interpreters to communicate with the indigenous communities. This immediately created a distance and hierarchy between the Spanish and the Quechua-speaking

³ Demarest and Conrad, 1984, p. 58

⁴ Cerrón-Palomino, 1989, p. 15

⁵ When Incan power was consolidated by victory over the Chancas, the Chinchay variety of Quechua was so widely distributed that the sovereigns of Cuzco themselves adopted it as the official language of the empire, in a manner reminiscent of the way in which Latin was adopted by Frankish conquerors" (15).

⁶ Cerrón-Palomino, 1989, p. 16

⁷ Citing Cieza, 1967

⁸ King and Hornberger, 2006, p. 180

natives as well as among the Quechua speakers themselves. By rejecting the need to learn Quechua and often expressing a disdain for communicating with the locals, the Spanish implemented a system of linguistic hierarchy, associating Spanish-speakers with the powerful minority. Further, as Cerrón-Palomino states, “the subdued majorities reemphasized their language differences when they realized that the linguistic unity achieved through Quechua was no longer valid,” thereby causing a fragmentation to the once united communities.⁹ Further cultural alteration occurred as religious leaders attempted to convert the natives to Christianity. Even this struggle was not without linguistic barriers as the question arose regarding what language one should preach to the people. Only the Jesuits pushed for learning Quechua to communicate with the people, which eventually led to the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767.¹⁰ All other religious groups with missionary goals chose to distance themselves from the people they were sent to lead and convert.

When looking at the linguistic shift in values among the indigenous communities in the post-colonization period, the natives now saw that Spanish had become the official language of the land. However, unlike when the Inca made Quechua the official language of the empire, Spanish worked to distance the indigenous groups from one another. In fact, one theory is that if Quechua was seen as stifling the other American languages present in the time of the Incas, then Spanish could symbolically act as an agent to free these languages from the dominance of Quechua.^{11,12} In general, Spanish became the language of power—economically, socially and politically—which became expressed in the educational systems and laws that were to pass.

The formal education that took place during colonization taught Quechua speakers Spanish so that they could better serve the Spanish in interpretation. This education, given to a privileged few, caused further distance among the natives, reflecting a hierarchy among the people with access

to education and those without. Accordingly, “indigenous language speakers frequently opt[ed] not to use their language in many situations in order to avoid the stigma attached to speaking it.”¹³ Thus began the sentiment that Quechua was inferior to Spanish, causing further striation among language groups and weakening of local languages and cultures.

As the colonization period gave way to the republican period, Quechua continued to suffer. This time, however, it was not simply from the political and social preference given to the Spanish language. The economic, technological and territorial developments of the Spanish and indigenous populations began to threaten the language as well. Since a language is dependent on the health of the culture that uses it, the health of the indigenous communities is important to understand the struggle the Quechua language underwent. As the government and Spanish profiteers exploited the riches of the Peruvian land, they did so with little regard for the native inhabitants and their uses of the land. Due to the pressure exuded on the land by mining and exploitation of its resources, many inhabitants were forced to move to more urban areas, separating them from their communities. In addition, the burgeoning technological advancements in transportation and communication worked to further dissipate the cultural connection within the communities. With the development of the railways came the expansion of exposure rural communities had with larger cities and other cultures. Youth began to speak Spanish rather than Quechua in order to avoid the embarrassment and discomfort of the social differences they felt due to their communities and languages of origin. This expansion of technology and transportation played a large role in increasing the linguistic shame young people felt towards their ancestors’ language. Furthermore, because of the expansion of industry and technology, Peru experienced an urban shift. Hornberger and Coronel-Molina calculate that “in 1940, 35 percent of the population resided in urban areas, 65 percent in rural sectors; by 1982 these numbers were reversed, with 65 percent of the country counting as urban and 35

⁹ Cerrón-Palomino, 1989, pp. 18-19

¹⁰ Cerrón-Palomino, 1989, p. 19

¹¹ King and Hornberger, 2006, p. 182

¹² Citing Urban (1991)

¹³ Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 14

percent as rural.”¹⁴ This shift in location inadvertently led youth to deemphasize Quechua and their indigenous heritage in preference for the Spanish language and heritage. Not only social, but economic success became associated with the Spanish language.

Case Study

After tracing the foundations and historical movements of the Quechua language and the evolution of linguistic hierarchy between Quechua and Spanish, one must look to the present to further comprehend the complex relationship between an indigenous language and a dominant language within a country like Peru. As previously asserted, the language of a people is often affected by the politics of those in power. Once a social meaning becomes inherently imputed into a language, issues of formalization, education, value transmission, and power echo repeatedly within the struggle for a language’s maintenance and/or revitalization. In looking at Quechua in Peru, it is illuminating to look at which interest groups have become involved, the missions, goals and motives of each group, goals the groups seem to collaborate on regarding Quechua, and the conflicts that arise between the multiple parties, motivations, and dynamics in this charged atmosphere of language protection and analysis.

Current Situation

Although Quechua has been spoken within indigenous communities of the Andes for hundreds of years, the use of this spoken language has been rapidly disappearing for years from the communities that once spoke little else. Hornberger and King call it an “endangered” language, despite the existence of some ten million speakers: “although Quechua speakers outnumber users of all other indigenous languages in South America combined, data from a range of sources indicate that a contraction of Quechua domains and a gradual cessation of intergenerational transmission of the language are well underway.”¹⁵ With each new generation, the distance from the traditionally spoken dialect and daily usage of Quechua dissipates, leading individuals, families, and

communities farther away from their ancestors’ language and system of values. Elderly generations no longer understand what their progeny say because while they may still speak Quechua, their children and grandchildren choose to speak Spanish. What little Quechua they may speak is reserved for formal traditions or in attempts to communicate with their elders.

This shift in the daily language use within Quechua communities has made Quechua, once shared among all members of the community, a point of division and differentiating status. To only speak Quechua today can lead to situations of social exclusion rather than inclusion, leading to deeper chasms between elders and youth in families and communities.¹⁶ Falling within the chasms are the values and modes of thinking that were traditionally passed from generation to generation through the Quechua language. There is an unconscious absorption of culture and knowledge that comes through growing up around certain stories, hearing a peer or an elder phrase something in their native tongue, and listening to the wisdom of those with more experience and knowledge regarding the paths and directions of the world.¹⁷ These are important elements that can only be learned when constantly surrounded by the sounds, thinking, and wisdom of family. However, this process of cultural cultivation that once was the responsibility of older generations has become interrupted by the desire of youth to learn Spanish and to possibly only save Quechua for traditional occasions.

As the younger generations choose to speak more Spanish than Quechua, they are demonstrating a general understanding of diglossia, where the value of one of two languages is considered greater than the value of the other, whether from a social, political, economic, or personal perspective. In this case, due to the Spanish colonization process that took place in Peru, Spanish became incorporated as the language of the colonizer and the conquistador, the language of power over the ancestral mother language of Quechua.¹⁸ As more and more individuals and

¹⁴ Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 25

¹⁵ King and Hornberger, 2004, p. 1

¹⁶ Godenzzi, 1992, p. 63

¹⁷ Flórez, 1992, p. 103

¹⁸ Aguirre, 1989, p. 39

families move to urban areas, they find themselves being ascribed a socioeconomic status based on the language they speak. Quechua signifies a lower class. Spanish does not. Because Spanish is the more powerful language in Peru, they choose to speak Spanish more often than Quechua, thereby causing a gap in their knowledge of the language of their ancestors. The pride the younger generations feel for the language they speak is one of demonstrating their linguistic similarities to others rather than maintaining the ancestral language and identifying with their differences.

Given the power dynamics among Quechua and Spanish speakers in Peru, education becomes an important tool to either encourage or counterbalance the role of linguistic power. In identifying the power of education, Hornberger and Coronel-Molina explain, that, “whereas education is an important avenue for social mobility and advancement, educational policies have long served to repress Quechua and Quechua speakers. Spanish has typically been the official language of schooling, and Quechua-speaking children face great disadvantages for speaking Quechua in school, a circumstance seemingly contributing to linguistic shame and language shift.”¹⁹ In years past, Quechua has been used in schools in order to teach Quechua-speaking children how to understand Spanish, the language in which the majority of their schooling would later be conducted. It has only been recently that bilingual education has sought to equalize this distance between languages in education. This language preference is played out in everyday life. For example, if someone is looking to move to the city or even to leave the country, he or she will choose to learn the language that will be most beneficial, so oftentimes Spanish or English are more readily sought after by parents for their children to learn.²⁰

Given these issues of language preference and diglossia, linguistic shame and language education currently in Peru, certain organizations or parties have contributed to the development or destruction of Quechua as a commonly spoken and appreciated language. Therefore, the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the

Quechua people themselves are all important and influential parties to the past, current, and future status of Quechua in Peru.

Interest Groups Involved

Many organizations work towards a change in the general view of indigenous languages such as Quechua in Peru; however, these groups have differing abilities, responsibilities, and objectives that they each strongly desire to fulfill. This section will briefly look at the role of the government, the participation of non-governmental organizations, and the interaction of the Quechua communities within the context of the Quechua-Spanish debate.

To begin, the Peruvian government has long been aware of the plight of indigenous languages within its borders, especially the decline of Quechua. However, what has the government done in the past to help? After all, up until 1979 Peruvian citizens could not vote unless they were literate in Spanish.²¹ “The three countries with the largest indigenous populations (Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru) rank among the lowest in terms of social spending, while the most sweeping changes seem to have occurred in countries with smaller indigenous populations, such as Colombia.”²² This signifies that the majority of indigenous populations have remained underrepresented and underserved in the past, thereby giving room for Spanish to continue to grow in political, economic, and social power. These dynamics at play have only recently begun to develop within legal and national policies.

The 1993 constitution of Peru identifies certain stipulations that relate directly to education and the importance of language education: “Bilingual intercultural education is guaranteed, ‘according to the characteristics of each zone,’ in the last paragraph of Article 17. Article 48 establishes Spanish as the national official language, with indigenous languages as official in the areas where they are numerically dominant.”²³ While the official stance of the Peruvian government appears to be in favor of the preservation and promotion of

¹⁹ Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 28

²⁰ Aguirre, 1989, 49

²¹ Coronel-Molina, 2007, p. 155

²² Hall and Patrinos, 2006, p. 33

²³ Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 32

language education and possibly indigenous language preservation, it does not initially state or imply ways in which it will do this. Therefore, as money and other resources are scarce, fewer educated and qualified teachers and fewer academic resources are available for students to enhance their learning.

Despite what the official documentation says, resource availability remains a problem for implementation. "It has only been within the last decade or so that the Andean governments have begun to provide greater economic and technological support as well as the full legal recognition needed to implement bilingual education at a national level."²⁴ Therefore, it has been up to many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help with the education of Quechua-speaking communities, particularly with the provision of bilingual education in their school systems. These organizations range from religiously affiliated to international groups, each with their own objectives and ideas of what indigenous communities need. One such NGO is Fe y Alegría (FYA) that offers "education in Latin America with the principle of equity, quality and lower cost."²⁵ Due to the sheer number of indigenous communities in Peru suffering from similar situations of limited resources, education, and the disappearance of ancestral languages, a coalition of Peruvian NGOs has come together since 1992 to provide bilingual education to students. Since 1992, Montoya states that they have "implemented a literacy program in 42 monolingual communities in the department of Cuzco, Cajamarca and Apurimac ... students are taught civic education and to read and write in Quechua and then Spanish."²⁶ This unique coalition also works to provide community figures as teachers for these schools, thereby building literacy within the communities and guaranteeing that the community's own form of Quechua and values will be more likely transmitted to the students. While many other such organizations exist to help in resource provision to the indigenous communities of Peru, the fact remains that once funding leaves the organization, the organization

leaves the people. This leaves the communities with a hole in their educational systems as they might no longer find the support or have the ability to sustain quality education for their youth.

Although it is easy to simply look at the governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in the education and promotion of the Quechua language and education within Peru, one cannot forget to look at the Quechua-speaking communities themselves as important factors in this process of growth and potential revitalization of the Quechua language. As late as 1916 with the Rumi Maqui Rebellion, indigenous communities rebelled against the treatment, rights (or lack thereof), and education of their communities, culture, and language.²⁷ Following these rebellions were indigenous movements and creations such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples to help promote and bring into political and social discourse the status of Quechua as a language and as a people.²⁸

In other initiatives exercised by the communities, a common problem exists when NGOs leave the communities and do not give the community members the opportunity and instruction to continue the work previously done by the non-governmental organization. The communities cannot sustain the initiatives. However, despite these tendencies, many communities have come together to seek outside help, so that their children can be economically competitive, socially involved, and politically capable. What is most difficult, though, when looking at the communities themselves, is the range of variance that exists within, between, and among them. Because of migration to the cities, what it means to be a community or to be Quechua has changed, thereby altering the values sought after and the ideas taught within the local schools.

Goals

With the work of governmental, nongovernmental and community organizations to enhance education and Quechua language acquisition in indigenous communities and for Quechua-speaking Peruvians, it is necessary to

²⁴ Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 44

²⁵ Montoya, 2004, p. 8

²⁶ Montoya, 2004, p. 8

²⁷ Coronel-Molina, 2007, p. 140

²⁸ Coronel-Molina, 2007, p.146

identify the various initiatives, values, and goals present in today's discourses on Quechua's existence and presence in Peru. One of the largest obstacles in valuation and preservation of the Quechua language is the process of standardization it must undergo in order to become a set written language. While the Quechua have a phrase of "*Kastillanu liyinapaq, ghichwa parlanaypaq*" ("Castilian (Spanish) for me to read and Quechua is in order for me to speak"), this process of standardization must take place to create a more consistent system of teaching Quechua and to provide more literary materials to Quechua readers.²⁹

Nowadays, for a language to achieve legitimacy, it must be standardized, unified and written in such a way that it can be taught and transmitted comprehensively. In working with a historically oral language, linguists, scholars and other language enthusiasts seek to standardize Quechua (or Quichua as it is called in Ecuador) into a form of writing that can work to translate and to unify the language. One of the most prominent debates in this process of standardization is identifying the alphabet. Given the multiple dialects of Quechua, scholars have identified between three and five vowels alive within the language. The First World Congress on the Quechua Language, 'Inka Faustina Espinoza Navarro,' convened in 2000 to discuss the alphabetical debate of standardization of Quechua. The Quechua Language Academy and the National University of San Antonio Abad attended this conference, seeking to encourage the maintenance of Quechua. However, "many members took a Cuzco-centric position, and hence failed to take into account dialectal variations in their orthographic suggestions."³⁰ The biggest reason for this debate between whether the written Quechua language should have three or five vowels is because of the influence of the Spanish system of writing on the Quechua language. To have five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) as in the Spanish alphabet would be to demonstrate the influence of Spanish and other modern languages on the historical language of Quechua. Supporters of the three-vowel system (a, i, u) proclaim three vowels to be

much truer to the sound and form of the spoken language, thereby being more true to Quechua's history.³¹

A problem that continues to persist is that the majority of those involved with deciding the process of standardization are academics and linguists rather than the community members and natives. However, the process of choosing a standard form of a language has much deeper issues and questions that significantly impact the community members. Who is considered and what does it mean to be Quechua? In seeking to standardize the language, linguists and standardization efforts effectively have come to a halt over these questions when deciding which dialect or dialects to include in the making of an "official" language. The danger that enters is the hierarchy perceived within the multiple dialects of Quechua. If one of the purposes of standardization is to preserve a culture through its language, should the chosen language not also appreciate and pay respects to all dialects that make up the Quechua language and culture? While it might appear to be physically impossible to incorporate all Quechua dialects in one standard Quechua language, it is worth considering why it is that one dialect should be more highly desired than another, even within the same language system.

The active parties within the Quechua debate essentially seek to eliminate the inferior social status of the language and seek equality between Spanish and Quechua. In order to do this, though, they must combat the issue of linguistic power both within the Quechua-speaking communities as well as within the society of non-Quechua communities due to, as Hornberger and Coronel-Molina state:

"The marked tendency to view other dialects of the language – even geographically contiguous and linguistically similar ones – as being alien, amusing, incomprehensible, ugly and so on. This local dialectical chauvinism is distinct from the concept of a supralocal hierarchy which may set one dialect as superior to all the others, as in the case of the so-called Quechua 'purists' who insist that the Cuzco dialect is the only 'real' Quechua since they believe it to

²⁹ Godenzzi, 1992, p. 70

³⁰ Hornberger and Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 40

³¹ Itier, 1992, p. 26

have been the dialect spoken by the Incas.”(16)

This idea that the Cuzco Quechua is the only true dialect or that there is actually one dialect that is superior to all others is working to create a break in the unity of the Quechua-speaking community as a whole because one small group is setting itself above its neighbors. In fact, as King and Hornberger point out, there is a factor that further divides the generations and their transmission of values. The dialectical difference between “the nationally standardized variety [of Quechua] (*Quichua Unificado*) and the local community variety (*Quichua auténtico*), spoken by elderly and more rural dwellers” causes for the diminishing number of Quechua speakers to have increasing difficulties communicating in their own language, both in Ecuador and other Quechua-speaking areas such as in Peru.³² However, if the communities were to overcome this idea that one dialect is better than another, they have the potential to be a very strong force in the effort to spread Quechua in Peru.

Simply improving the image of Quechua within the indigenous communities however, is not enough. Indigenous communities must gain support and respect from non-Quechua inhabitants as well. According to Hornberger and Coronel-Molina:

“It would be a significant 'vote of confidence' if mainstream officials were to accept the use of Quechua (or any indigenous language) within the halls of government. Such an action would signal that Quechua is a legitimate language and could, over time, influence the attitudes of the mass of the population, both Spanish speaking and Quechua-speaking.” (33)

By doing this, a circular and reciprocating relationship might be formed to permit an appreciation, respect, and usage of Quechua on an equal level with Spanish in Peru. Although this process could not happen immediately, the shift toward seeing Quechua as a language sufficient and even encouraged for use in daily communication would greatly help in spreading the acceptance of Quechua within Peruvian society.

³² King and Hornberger, 2006, p. 187

Another goal of governmental, non-governmental and indigenous organizations is to maintain the transmission of values and the preservation of the Quechua culture without freezing the culture in the past and preventing it from moving forward. “Traditionally, informal socialization received at the hands of family and community members is the means by which an older generation passes on its linguistic and cultural wisdom and practices to the younger generation.”³³ The transmission of values and culture has been interrupted as Spanish has become more prominent and popular among younger generations and because families and individuals are now moving away from their ancestors’ communities in order to seek better economic opportunities in urban areas. Language must be recognized as a method of cultural transmission:

“Language is a key marker of ethnicity: for many, being Quechua means speaking Quechua. Indeed, Quechua-speaking people often self-identify as Quechua speakers, rather than as 'Quechuas' per se. Quechua speakers are also likely to self-identify according to their geographical region and local cultural traditions, such as otavaleño, saragureño, paceño, santiagueño, cochabambino, cusqueño or ayacuchano.”³⁴

All of these different ways of self-identification with the Quechua culture and language make it difficult to have a clear estimate of the real size of Quechua populations in Peru and other countries. Past censuses show strong fluctuations in those who identify themselves as Quechua in different decades. This again relates to the social status associated with the language’s value in society. Other reasons for variance include, as Hall and Patrinos reveal, that “indigenous areas are often undersurveyed due to civil conflict and/or geographic isolation, and therefore the size of indigenous populations is underestimated.”³⁵ They posit that such underestimation is especially problematic when it comes to policy decisions.

³³ King and Hornberger, 2006, p. 187

³⁴ King and Hornberger, 2006, p. 187

³⁵ Hall and Patrinos, 2006, p. 59

Looking at the factors affecting the current situation and status of Quechua in Peru and understanding the various roles different parties have played within the Quechua language debates gives partial insight to the position of Quechua in Peru. Looking at how this situation is echoed internationally adds another critical dimension.

An International Perspective

Although the Quechua-Spanish debate outlined above in present-day Peru may appear to be important only to indigenous citizens of the country or to enthusiasts who seek to preserve the Quechua cultures and traditions, the issue of language loss and destruction is a global concern. Language loss occurs when a language gains prominence over a traditional language, whether in a political, social or economic context, leading individuals to learn, prefer and utilize that language to the point of extinction of the other. This is not to say that one must only speak traditional or ancestral languages; however, it is important to see the power and value that rests in choosing a language to use.

According to statistics, there are over 7,000 languages in the world today. However, every two weeks, another language becomes extinct, “and each time a language disappears, a part of history – a subtle way of thinking – vanishes too.”³⁶ Each language represents a piece of culture, a perspective on the world that is unique. Language is imparted with the ideas of the world as perceived by the people who use, develop, and pass on the language. However, these ideas can only be passed from one generation to the next if each generation works to teach and practice the language. Unfortunately, given the pressures and tendencies to value some languages over others, the world will continue to lose 26 languages a year unless individuals, communities, and governments take action to preserve the languages and cultures at risk of extinction.

Conclusion

The Quechua-Spanish debate is on-going in Peru today. It is not simply a matter of preserving a language through political recognition and declaration of its presence in the country’s heritage.

Instead, the debate involves varied parties, diverse interests, and multiple goals, all with various social factors and contexts in which they work. Standardization remains an issue of contestation among scholars and native speakers, slowing the process by which education and literature can be disseminated to students and communities. Educational systems suffer from a lack of funding and training. Meanwhile, social, political, and economic limitations discourage the learning and speaking of Quechua among individuals and groups. All of these factors, therefore, hinge on the crucial process of valuation, giving and demonstrating a social appreciation for the Quechua language in Peruvian society.

When looking at this conflict of languages and the social and cultural values embedded in the use of a language, one can see that the situation of Quechua and Spanish in Peru is not dissimilar to many other societies’ struggles to preserve and encourage the use of a native or indigenous language despite the presence of a more dominant and seemingly more popular language. The decision to communicate in a native language oftentimes becomes stigmatized and fraught with negative social and economic implications. In order to overcome this, individuals must first come to place value on the teaching, learning, and practice of the language. By using a language of the majority, one does not face social ostracization. To make indigenous languages more acceptable, education can be very influential. If kids are taught from an early age the power and value of a language, they are more likely to appreciate, respect and continue to value the benefits of the language in the future.

Once one understands the values embedded in a chosen language, one can then see several barriers that are necessary to overcome in order to improve a language’s status. First, in today’s society, it is important to have a standardized system of writing and recording a language. As seen with the Quechua language in Peru, this process is filled with conflicts of how to determine which dialects should be seen as the most “pure,” how to write the language in a way that makes sense given other modern languages, and how to maintain the values that are usually transmitted orally by generations within a style of writing that remains true to the people and the culture from which the language

³⁶ “Saving Dying Languages in ‘the Linguists,’” 2009

comes. Another multi-layered challenge lies in not only having people of the indigenous language and society value and utilize their language but for those outside of the indigenous culture to value and respect the language and culture enough to discourage linguistic prejudice. Governmental and social programs can help in these cases to bring about linguistic legitimacy, but a language's legitimacy must also be proven through the daily use and appreciation of the culture from which it comes.

By looking at the situation of Quechua in Peru and its struggle for a footing equivalent to Spanish's linguistic role in the country, one can see that individuals within and outside of Quechua communities must place value on the language itself and its use. However, one must understand that language and the language one uses works as a form of identification and inclusion for an individual and a group. The power of identity brought about by language can be very strong, especially where social and economic statuses are affected. When looking at identity and the power of a language, one must ask: should all languages be valued equally? Is it possible for equality between languages to occur? In the case of Quechua in Peru, will the changing of educational and societal perceptions of the language bring about a greater sense of appreciation and equality?

The value of a language is embedded in the society in which it lives. The factors affecting the valuation of Quechua in Peru not only reflect the present social and economic situation but also find their basis of origin within historical political and communal movements of power. Ranging from the time of the Incan Empire to the Spanish colonizers to those in power today, Quechua's status and the values within it are in constant flux. Linguists and cultural preservationists are seeking to preserve the Quechua culture, trying to standardize the Quechua language so that it has greater status, usage, and importance. Within the standardization process, though, dialectal preferences and status struggles come to the forefront as well. Throughout all of this, though, Quechua descendents and non-Quechua residents must be aware of the linguistic power struggle that is reflected in every decision they make to speak Spanish over Quechua. A language is never neutral, nor is it ever separate from the culture within which it is spoken. The

Quechua-Spanish situation in Peru is linguistically one that remains a debate in standardization and codification; culturally, it risks the extinction of ancestral and community values; and politically and economically, it remains charged with socioeconomic implications and consequences, affecting the lives of over three million people.

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