Language Policy: Status Planning for the Quechua Language in Peru

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Quechua is an indigenous language of Peru that is slowly dying out, as speakers of Quechua realize that the only way they can better their lives is to turn their backs on their mother tongue and learn to speak the Spanish of the dominant class. In this paper, I present a case study of the status of Quechua in Peruvian society. I discuss some of the specific social and political causes contributing to Quechua language loss, detail the current functional domains that Quechua serves, and suggest some possible measures that could be attempted to improve its status. I also explore the relationship of the functional domains to Peruvian language policies, both overt and covert, and conclude with some projections on the future of the Quechua language.

Language policy is a very wide field that covers a range of practices. Schiffman (1996: 3) defines it simply as "the set of positions, principles and decisions reflecting [a] community's relationships to its verbal repertoire and communicative potential." These positions and principles can be either overt and explicitly stated in a formal document or laws, or covert, not written down or formalized but reflected in popular attitudes nonetheless. Language planning, on the other hand, is a more formal procedure that falls within this broad area known as language policy. Language planning can be defined as a "deliberate intervention in language change; that is, changes in the systems of language code or speaking or both that are planned by organizations that are established for such purposes or given a mandate to fulfill such purposes" (Rubin and Jernudd, 1971, cited in Cooper 1989: 30); additionally, as Tollefson (1981: 175) stresses, it deals with "planned change in the structure and status of language varieties."

Language planning itself can then be further divided; the two areas in which I am most interested are corpus planning and status planning. Essentially, corpus planning deals with the *form* of the language, for example, vocabulary and orthography. Status planning, on the other hand, is concerned with the *function*, or perhaps more accurately, the *functional domains* of a language or variety within a given society (cf., Fishman 1979: 12; Cobarrubias 1983: 42). Cobarrubias (1983: 42) indicates that in general,

changes in corpus have received more attention than changes in status, and argues that this situation needs to be addressed. The present paper will make one small contribution to this effort, specifically related to the case of Quechua in Peru. I will focus my attention on status planning by discussing the possibility of increasing the status for Peruvian Quechua. This will involve consideration of the current domains in which Quechua functions, implications for the survival of Quechua based on the relative status of each of those domains, and possible means of increasing the range of functional domains which Quechua can serve. In the process, I will, of course, take into consideration current Peruvian policy trends.

Literature Review and Background on Peru

The general consensus of most researchers is that the field of status planning deals with the relative status of one language to another, or between varieties of the same language in regard to the social domains in which each is used (Wiley 1996: 108-109; Cooper 1989: 32; Wardhaugh 1992: 347; Altehenger-Smith 1990: 29; Cobarrubias 1983; Fishman, 1979: 12). Altehenger–Smith (1990: 29) emphasizes that the various models of status planning do not focus so much on the actual process of decision–making as on its outcome, while Wardhaugh stresses its functional cast. He maintains that status planning affects not only what functions a languages serves, but also the rights of those who use it: "For example, when speakers of a minority language are suddenly denied the use of that language in educating their children, their language has lost status" (Wardhaugh 1992: 347), and the previous rights of those who speak that language have been restricted. In fact, Wardhaugh's words can be applied particularly well to the status of Quechua in Peru over the course of its history, as will become obvious in this paper.

It is important to understand exactly what the current state of affairs is in regards to language policy and planning in Peru. This country is multilingual, with Spanish as the dominant language as a result of the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century. According to a 1984 census, about 72.64% of the population speaks this language. Quechua is the second most widely spoken language, with 24.08% of the speakers in the country, followed by Aymara and a host of other languages spoken by various heterogeneous and widely–scattered groups in the Peruvian jungles, distributed among 3.29% of the speakers (Cerrón–Palomino 1989: 14).

Quechua was not the only language spoken Peru before the Conquest. Which language was widely spoken depended greatly on who was in power and the part of the country in which one found oneself. Cultural contact, of course, meant linguistic contact, which often also meant linguistic domination of one group over another:

> Over time, the expansion of one language at the expense of others varied in accordance with the expansions

and recessions of the peoples. Consequently, the present linguistic map is a result of a series of displacements and superpositions of these languages... their interaction—actually that of the speakers—undoubtedly established the multilingual nature of the country. (Cerrón-Palomino 1989: 11)

It seems clear that when Cerrón-Palomino talks about the expansion and recession of languages, he is referring to the respective status of the languages as well as their distribution throughout the territory. In the time of the Incas, Quechua was widely spoken, and was, in fact, the main lingua franca. With the arrival of the Spaniards and their subsequent subjugation of the indigenous peoples, this situation rapidly started changing. The Spaniards insisted that their new subjects learn Spanish and give up their own language. It was not quite as easy, painless, or rapid as the Spaniards might have wished, and for a long time, Quechua was still a primary language of communication.

However, over the last 500 years or so, the Spaniards slowly managed to instill their own negative opinion of the Quechua language in the native speakers, thus achieving the lowering of that language's status to the point where many speakers are ashamed to use it (Cerrón–Palomino 1989: 27). Cerrón–Palomino discusses the issue of power dynamics in relation to the development of statuses. He indicates that we have to remember that it is the people who have power, and not the language itself. Also, it is important to understand *who* has the linguistic power in a given situation and how they manifest it in explicit and implicit policy. This detail has the greatest influence on determining which language has the higher status. Cerrón–Palomino gives Peru as a case in point of the effect on language status of the group in power:

> This is clearly shown by the Peruvian situation, since, due to the structure of the present society, ... the functional jurisdiction of the languages is unequally distributed and gives the edge to Spanish, to the disadvantage of ancestral languages and the cultures that the latter support; Peru is thus a typical diglossic society. (1989: 11)

Cerrón–Palomino is not the only one to emphasize the diglossic nature of Peruvian linguistic reality. Fishman (1967: 32) does not refer specifically to Peru when he discusses the restrictive effect of limited role repertoires on linguistic repertoires, but his words nonetheless have clear implications for the Peruvian situation. He maintains that the smaller the range of the role repertoires (functional domains) of a given linguistic repertoire (lan-

guage or variety), the less used that linguistic repertoire will be, "with the result that separate languages or varieties would be(come) superfluous." López Quiroz (1990), on the other hand, does refer specifically to Peru in his work. He emphasizes the hegemonic efforts of the Spaniards throughout the conquest, colonization and up to the present day. He stresses the difference between diglossia and bilingualism:

> Regarding the analysis of the category of diglossia, we may deduce that it is only possible to conceive of a society as bilingual when the functional distribution between the languages spoken in that society is relatively equitable and neither one nor the other suffers reduction or deterioration, but rather individuals tend to use both languages freely and creatively. (1990: 107; translation mine)

In other words, the situation is bilingual if the two languages have equal status; if one is in a superior position, the situation is diglossic. It is the insidious psychological influence of the ancient Spanish *conquistadores'* and present day *criollos'*[1] opinions of their superiority over the indigenous populations which has led to the disdain of the *criollos* and the shame of the Quechua people themselves with regard to the Quechua language.

López Quiroz (1990: 105) illustrates a very dramatic extreme of such linguistic shame, which he refers to as linguistic asphyxia. He asserts that some people would rather hide their status as native Quechua speakers, and let others think they are "mentally limited" (i.e., retarded) because they do not speak Spanish very well. This is due, he maintains, to "the strong social pressure that exists against indigenous languages used as a vernacular" (1990: 105; translation mine). Cerrón–Palomino (1989: 26) states quite emphatically that the death of many of the ancestral Peruvian languages was due to deliberate efforts by the hegemonic society: "The policies which brought about the linguicide paralleled the ethnocidal and genocidal policies of the governing groups. Many languages died out not only because the speakers turned to other languages, mainly Spanish, but also ... because of the considerable reduction, or sometimes total annihilation, of the respective populations."

Schiffman (1996: 4) emphasizes the effect that diglossia exercises on both

[1] It is important to understand that the term criollo refers specifically to that part of the population of more or less pure Spanish descent, but who were born in Latin America. This population thus has inherited the ancient pride of Spanish heritage. At the same time, they have a new and different world perspective because of having been raised in Latin America, which has completely distinct environmental and social influences from those of Spain. Thus, they still feel the necessity to hold themselves separate from the indigenous peoples, maintaining the social and racial "purity" (although in reality this is a fallacy, since there has been so much mixing through the centuries of all the races which are in Peru) which is what grants them their "superiority."

corpus and status planning. As a social construct which has evolved unconsciously over time, it becomes very entrenched ("persistent") in the mentality of the people, and thus very resistant to any kind of rapid change such as a government might attempt by simply passing a law. In reference to Peru, this becomes clear through knowing that it has taken centuries of contact and psychological pressure for the dominant sector of society to convince the subaltern one of its lower prestige. Therefore, the government will not be able to reverse this and convince all Quechua speakers to start speaking their language again by merely passing a law instituting bilingual education in the schools. There is no matching social reinforcement to prove to either Spanish or Quechua speakers that there is any social value in being able to speak Quechua. It took centuries to devalue the language; it may take centuries more to totally revalorize it.

Ferguson (1996: 29) makes a different point about the relative prestige of the two languages in a diglossic situation which also finds resonance in the Peruvian experience. He says that in general the H (high) variety, which in the case of Peru is Spanish, is considered by *all* speakers to be superior in some way to the L (low) variety, or Quechua and other indigenous languages. "Sometimes the feeling is so strong that H alone is regarded as real and L is reported 'not to exist'.... This attitude cannot be called a deliberate attempt to deceive the questioner, but seems almost a self-deception." While no one in Peru yet denies that Quechua exists, many native Quechua speakers who have learned Spanish will deny that they speak Quechua, despite quite obvious influences on their Spanish speech habits by Quechua — most notably in their lexicon and pronunciation. There are any number of reasons why these speakers might make this kind of denial: linguistic shame, desire for social mobility, simple continuous daily contact with Spanish and the need to be able to communicate, the perception that Spanish is the most appropriate language for education, the urbanization of the Quechua speaking peoples, and so on, ad infinitum. However, all of these ultimately can be reduced once again to the fact that Spanish has prestige and Quechua does not.

It is perhaps relevant to note here an interesting fact about the functioning of status planning. This is an activity which happens somewhat after the fact. In other words, it is compensatory or retroactive. In reading the discussions of all the various researchers, it becomes clear that different languages or varieties achieve their current status through a process mediated by what Schiffman (1996: 5) calls linguistic culture, or "the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language." The unconscious (covert) nature of all the elements of his list is quite notable. For any actual planning to be able to take place, all of these various points which are already unconsciously present in the constitution of language status need to be brought to conscious awareness and talked about, in order to

plan to try to change them. This is what makes status *planning* a compensatory phenomenon.

Thinking in these terms necessarily involves the need to understand how beliefs and attitudes become established, and what can be done to bring about changes in attitudes. Ferguson (1996: 275) emphasizes that "discovering language attitudes is more difficult than finding the basic data," but that it is a very necessary part of establishing language policy. Such attitudes will obviously have serious implications for any effort to change the status of one language relative to another.

Schiffman (1990a, 1990b), Eastman (1990) and Spolsky (1978) also discuss the impact of language attitudes and power relations on language planning and policies in various regions of the world. Spolsky (1978: 44) specifically addresses the Latin American context thus: "While there are few data on the situation in Latin America, some studies suggest the maintenance of Indian vernaculars only as the languages of socially inferior and uneducated groups." Such a statement by this time is somewhat outdated in terms of the amount of research available, since the study of indigenous languages has become very *de rigeur* in recent years, but the truth still remains that in many cases, those who speak indigenous languages are often regarded as "socially inferior and uneducated."

The Guaraní language in Paraguay is an example that is at the same time both supportive of and contradictory to this generalization. While Spolky's reference to the functional domains of Guaraní may be true in the most general sense devoid of a social context ("The typical speaker of Guaraní is a poor, inconspicuous, cigar–smoking woman; of Spanish, an educated townsman" [1978: 44]), Rubin discusses the situation in much more detail. She indicates that Spolky's words may well be too simplistic. While a politically diglossic situation does exist, in which status *may* be revealed by language choice in situations where either language might be used, Rubin has found that in general, Guaraní is used for more intimate or informal situations and Spanish for more formal or official ones (for example, in government or administrative situations):

> Since Spanish has, throughout Paraguayan history, been used for administrative purposes, it is in such formal situations and in discussing related topics that Spanish ... is, in fact, used. Since Paraguay did not develop a sharply defined class system, usage in non-rural, non-formal situations falls back on the equalitarian [*sic*] criteria of intimacy and the seriousness of a situation.... Status does not seem to be a determining factor in linguistic behavior. (1972: 529)

One detail she does not discuss in her paper is the racial categories in-

volved. Is it equally likely for a person of primarily *criollo* descent to learn Guaraní as a first language in rural areas, as it is for someone of indigenous descent in those same rural areas? Rubin does not seem to consider race to be a factor in first language learned. However, this issue is very pertinent to the Peruvian case, which might otherwise be considered to be somewhat similar to Guaraní. The reason that the Quechua *language* is more commonly found in rural areas is specifically because that is where the Quechua *people* have been concentrated until recent decades. Thus, bilingualism in Peru is very much a class–based issue, with classes being formed principally along racial lines.

Case Study: Functional Domains of Quechua

Various researchers have treated the topic of functional domains in a language (cf. Appel and Muysken 1987; Prujiner 1986; Cobarrubias 1983). In examining the status of the Quechua language in Peru and exploring options for status planning, I feel it is very important to emphasize sociopolitical issues. Stewart's (1972) specification of language functions provides a framework that allows such a focus; therefore, I will follow his guidelines. Cooper (1989: 99-119) refers to Stewart's functions as *targets* of status planning, since such functions or domains of language use are very often affected by the status of the language or variety in the society under discussion. This being the case, the spread of a language into a new function would naturally be an appropriate objective of trying to improve or broaden the status of that language.

Stewart (1978: 540-41) lists ten functions that a language or variety may serve in a society. (1) The *official* function refers to the political or administrative domain, which is often specified constitutionally and is recognized nationwide. (2) The *provincial* function is applicable to the official language(s) of a province or region within the country. (3) The *wider communication* function involves a language variety that operates as a lingua franca across language frontiers within the country, but does not have any "official" capacity as described in (1) and (2) above. (4) The *international* function concerns varieties that may not have "official" status (indeed, the remainder of the categories are specifically excluded by Stewart from official or provincial standing), but may be used for communication across national boundaries. (5) The *capital* function refers to the primary language or variety used in or around the national capital. (6) The *group* function pertains to the main language of communication of a single cultural or ethnic group. (7) The *educational* function relates to the language used for primary and secondary (but specifically not university) education in all school subjects, either regionally or nationally. (8) The *school subject* function differs from the educational in that the language is taught only as a school subject, but is not necessarily used as the means of communication in teaching it; also, this function can exist in the higher education setting.

(9) The *literary* function refers to the language's use for either literary or scholarly pursuits; and (10) the *religious* function pertains to use of the language for the practice of a given religion.

Peruvian Quechua clearly does not serve all of these functions, although it does fulfill some of them. The current social status of Quechua in Peru has already been examined above. The remainder of the paper will discuss specifically which of the functional domains it does fill and how those domains impact its status. The paper will also detail possible ways of spreading its use to other domains and with what possible effect on its status.

Stewart's first function is that of *official* language. In the case of Peru, this is a situation which tends to fluctuate depending on the views of the government in power. In 1975, during Velasco Alvarado's presidency, Quechua was legally declared an official language of Peru, "coequal with Spanish, and ... taught at all levels of education beginning in 1976 and used in all court actions involving Quechua speakers beginning in 1977" (Hornberger 1995: 189). This was such big news that it even made the front page of the leading newspaper in Lima (*El Comercio*, May 26, 1975). Later, however, this law was retracted in the 1979 constitution. In this document, Spanish is designated as the only official language, with Quechua and Aymara having "official use zones" (Hornberger 1995: 189). Hence, from a legal perspective, Quechua has both been and not been an official national language in fairly recent history in Peru.

The category of "official use zones" could equate to another of Stewart's domains, that of *provincial* use, with official language status limited to certain legally specified regions of the country. Currently, the 1979 constitution is still in force, and so Quechua retains its legally recognized provincial status. Cerrón–Palomino (1989: 26) indicates that such a limitation of Quechua to specific regions or ethnic groups could be problematic, especially in large coastal cities which have experienced a huge in-migration of indigenous peoples from the highlands, looking for better opportunities. Such a regional limitation could lead to the suppression of an entire ethnolinguistic group's right to speak their native language, by the simple act of their moving from one place to another. Hence, he suggests that "a solution based on personal criteria would be preferable." In this case, such a solution might be more in line with Stewart's *group* function (number 6 in the list above), which doesn't necessarily distinguish by geographic region. For the moment, however, speaking Quechua remains mostly a regional issue. It is primarily spoken in the rural Andes, where you can still find monolingual Quechua communities. However, even in the highlands, metropolitan cities such as Cuzco are experiencing a shift towards Spanish monolingualism. And while Quechua may occasionally be heard in the large coastal cities such as Lima, those few occasions will only be in homes and small markets in areas fringing the city where the Quechua immigrants tend to congregate and settle. I can assert from personal experience that it is never heard in public places within the cities proper. This is because

most speakers of it are ashamed for monolingual Spanish speakers to know that they speak such a "backward" language, as discussed in the previous section.

Clearly, then, as the above shows, Quechua does not serve the *capital* function. This results in another negative impact on its status, since, as Cooper (1989: 106) emphasizes, when political power, social prestige, and economic activity are centered in the capital, this tends to cause the language spoken there to spread from there to the periphery. Spanish is dominant in the capital, and is slowly spreading outward to marginal territories. As a result, Quechua is disappearing from this domain. Alternatively, then, if there were any way to promote greater use of Quechua by *all* city–dwellers, and not just the rural immigrants, it might be possible to spread Quechua through this route also.

Having emphasized the legal stature of Quechua, it is now logical to point out the difference between legal recognition and actual, social use. Cerrón–Palomino (1989: 25) states that "it is well known that the [original effort] to promote Quechua failed before more than a few steps toward its implementation were taken." He also maintains that such "official" recognition of Quechua was little more than lip service, apparently offered in an attempt to gain the political support of the indigenous population (1989: 26). Hence, even when Quechua was an "official" language, that fact did not enhance its status or its level of usage among the general populace, and so in reality, it was little more than a useless gesture, made without much thought or planning as to means of implementation of the law. Additionally, whether Quechua is defined as having a *provincial* or a *group* function, both definitions still restrict its use and thus limit its potential status.

Wider communication, the third of Stewart's functions, is another interesting historical case in multilingual Peru. During colonial times, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Quechua was essentially a lingua franca between the Spaniards and the Quechua natives (Cooper 1989: 105). Over the centuries and with increasing contact between the original populations and the *criollos*, Spanish has been increasingly enforced socially as the dominant language, as discussed in the previous section. Quechua no longer functions as a lingua franca between speakers of Spanish and those of Quechua, and so one more valuable function of the language has been lost.

Despite this loss of a function previously held, Quechua has made an interesting gain on the *international* front. First of all, Quechua is spoken throughout South America, in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Certainly, its strongest influence is felt in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, the countries that formed the base of the Incan empire in pre–Columbian times. These countries still have large populations who have spoken it without interruption for more than 450 years; in the other countries, it is spoken only in very small, isolated communities which have very