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EDUC 294
Public Intellectual Essay

Lessons From the Other Side of the Hemisphere:
Bilingual Education in Ecuador

Ueta jatarihun
Free ourselves now

chaimanta nuca yachacucrini
For this I am going to educate myself
quillca catinata yahahpaca, quishpirihamina quishpi cashpaca,
knowing to read will liberate me
allimi causasha...
and now liberated, I will live well.
tucui causai na mana sarui cancachu.
Maybe all my life I won't be a slave.

Caru llactamanta, nuncachic shamunchic
Of the far lands I have come,
jatun mashaita, nuchanchic mashcanchic.
looking for our freedom
Huaccha runacuna. Ueta jatarihun!
the poor...we now rise.
Tucui tantarihpa
Everyone together
pacta causnata mashcashun.
we will look for equality.

Ecuadorian Quichua Poem (Moya 36)

Quechua, an indigenous language of the Andean region of South America, is currently spoken by ten million people in six countries: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina (“Languages”). Around one-third of these speakers are monolingual while two-thirds are bilingual in Quechua and Spanish. Because these speakers are so numerous and live in countries where the official language is Spanish, more demands have been made in favor of bilingual education. Each of the six countries have reacted in various ways ranging from the creation of bilingual schools to empty promises. Similarly, the United States also is coping with

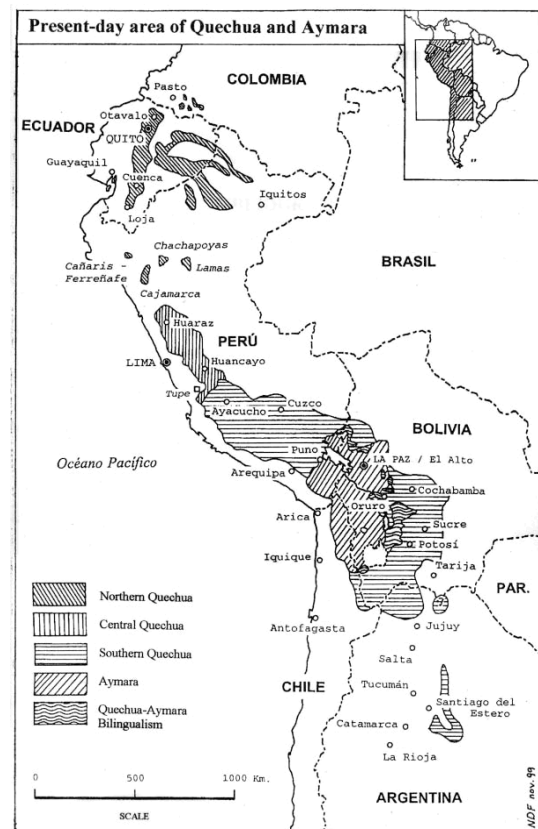
demands for bilingual education, especially in English and Spanish. Therefore, it is necessary for the U.S. to look beyond itself and learn from the victories and failings of bilingual education in other parts of the world. In the interest of conciseness, Ecuador will be focused upon as an example of bilingual movements and policies in the Andean region.

History and Varieties of Quechua

Quechua has a rich history in the Andes beginning in pre-Incan times. Even before the Incan Empire conquered much of western South America, Quechua was a widely spoken language. Later, the Incas made Quechua their official language and spread its use by conquering new territories. Even after the conquest of area by Spain, Quechua served as a lingua franca among indigenous peoples of different groups and Spaniards (Hornberger 13). However, by the seventeenth century, Spanish began displacing Quechua. Now, all countries that are located where the Incan Empire was before, recognize Spanish as their official language.

Although Spanish is the official language of these six countries, there is still a strong presence of indigenous languages, especially Quechua. In reality, the Quechua spoken varies from country to country and is not a standardized language. In Ecuador, the variety of Quechua spoken is called Quichua or Northern Quechua. Throughout this investigation “Quichua” will be used when referring to Quechua in Ecuador and “Quechua” will be used when referring to the language in a multi-national context. Despite the fact that different varieties of Quechua are spoken in each country, it is important to recognize that they all face the

(Hornberger and Coronel-Molina 12)



same struggle of incorporating bilingual and monolingual Quechua speakers into the political and educational processes of the nations.

Language Attitudes in Latin American Societies

One important hindrance present in all nations with Quechua speakers is the concept of linguistic shame that has been in place for centuries. It does vary from country to country and greatly depends on the context, but many investigations have cited the strong link between speaking Quechua and linguistic shame. Spanish has dominated the Andean region since the Spanish conquest. As a result of the of prolonged domination and an association of Spanish with the upper class, Quechua has been stigmatized by non-quechua speakers and Quechua speakers alike. Quechua speakers are therefore are sometimes embarrassed by their language and use Spanish in order to avoid stigmatization. Likewise, many Quechua speaking groups often demand that their children be educated in Spanish and not in both languages because of an association of Spanish with upward mobility. Negative stereotypes associated with Quechua and its speakers reinforce the pervasive presence of language shame and stigmatization. For example, it can often be heard that speakers are “uneducated,” “uncultured” and that educators believe that Quechua is a “backward” or “grammarless” language (Hornberger and Coronel-Molina 14). In addition, Quechua speakers call Quechua *runasimi*, which translates to “human language.” However, many Ecuadorians now commonly use the first part of the word, *runa*, to mean “cheap” or “of bad quality” (King 364). Stereotypes such as these are important to overcome if Quechua is to survive and be taught in schools.

Another importance hindrance to the survival of Quichua in Ecuador is the incorporation of the language in modern Ecuadorian society. One study of language attitudes in Ecuador found that 100% of mestizos, people of mixed indigenous and Spanish heritage, identified Spanish as the language spoken in Ecuador, but only 68% mentioned Quichua (Hornberger Coronel-Molina

15). Also, the study showed that most did not consider Quichua to be a part of contemporary Ecuador, rather that it is a symbol of the past. As this developing country fights to overcome poverty and unemployment by focusing on technology and international tourism, Quichua is being left behind as a mere symbol of Ecuadorian history.

Quichua is being increasingly displaced by other languages that are seen as being of greater importance in modern society. Often, when an Ecuadorian mentions bilingual education they are referring to a program that teaches Spanish and English, or another Western language, not Spanish and Quichua. English is taught in the majority of Ecuadorian schools, especially high school, because it is seen as a language of progress and economic success. Also, all Ecuadorian universities offer English classes or programs while few offer classes in Quechua. In this age of globalization where English reigns and is considered the lingua franca of the world, indigenous languages such as Quechua have a shrinking place in society and are in danger of extinction.

Government Involvement

Despite the fact that Quichua is still not recognized as an official language in Ecuador, the government has taken many steps to incorporate Quechua into the national conscience. In 1981 the first legislation was created that supported indigenous language use in education. As a result of this legislation, schools in predominantly indigenous zones were officially required to offer bilingual education (King 379). Furthermore, in 1983, an article was added to the constitution which decrees that “the educational systems in predominantly indigenous zones should use Quichua (or the community’s respective language) as the primary language of education and Spanish as the language of intercultural relations” (King 379). While both of these government legislations were important steps in the recognition and maintenance of Quichua in Ecuador, they did not assure that the words would be come actions.

Due to strong criticism and pressure from indigenous organizations, the government took another important step towards ensuring bilingual education in the nation. In 1988, The National Directorate of Bilingual Indigenous (Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Indígena Bilingüe) was created. The directorate was put in charge of organizing and administrating schools where the population was more than half indigenous (Hornberger “Bilingual” 180) . In addition, its responsibilities included “developing pedagogical materials; promoting the unified standard of various indigenous languages; coordinating regional directorates in each of the country’s 22 provinces; implementing and evaluating health, environmental, and community education programs; and providing all in-service and pre-service teacher training” (King 380). Allocation of resources and readjusting priorities continues to be a great problem facing the directorate, but it has proved to be crucial in creating and improving bilingual education throughout Ecuador.

Creation of Bilingual Schools

In 1972, the first large scale bilingual Spanish-Quichua school was created. The goal of the school was to use Quichua as the medium of instruction, to teach Spanish as a second language, and to enrich students’ cultural identity. In 1989 there were 17 of these schools, and more than 600 students participating the program (King 385). Due to the successes of these school, more bilingual schools were founded in various regions of the country. According to the National Directorate of Bilingual Indigenous estimates, there are 2000 bilingual primary schools, 40 bilingual high schools, and six intercultural bilingual pedagogical institutes (King 387). Some estimate that the numbers are actually higher because many small schools do not report.

Benefits of Bilingual Education

In traditional schools, Quechua students tend to be ignored, forgotten, or treated unfairly. Bilingual schools allow students to learn in a safe environment where they can focus on learning

rather than on self-preservation. Studies have shown that Ecuadorian, Quechua-speaking children who attended non-bilingual schools were less communicative and less enthusiastic about schooling in general (Hornberger Coronel-Molina 47) Similarly, students were much more likely to be punished and repressed and teachers frequently discouraged students from speaking Quichua. For these reasons, Quechua children often have more successful learning experiences in bilingual schools and overcome the chronic silencing of indigenous perspectives in education.

In addition, bilingual education has larger implication in terms of political mobilization. Most schools are designed as vehicles for providing meaningful instruction and literacy training in students' first language prior to their transition into Spanish. This transition is important in the fight for equality in the Ecuador. Because these students learn Spanish, but retain their linguistic identity, many have cited that bilingual schools enable indigenous peoples to become more political active and mobilize populations more effectively.

Obstacles Facing Bilingual Education

The single greatest obstacle facing bilingual education is the lack of qualified teachers. Those who are qualified tend to stay in urban areas where salaries are higher and often only under-qualified teachers are willing to teach in remote areas (King 388). Although The National Directorate of Bilingual Indigenous does train teachers, it simply cannot meet the nation's demand. The lack of funding for the National Directorate and the lack of funding for indigenous schools in general is a serious concern. In fact, indigenous persons constitute 40% of the country's population, but much less money is given to schools with a high indigenous presence (King 389). Many times, non-Quichua speakers or monolingual Spanish speakers are the only teachers available to teach in remote areas. In addition, some Quichua speaking teachers do not speak Quichua well enough to teach a class, so they rely heavily on Spanish. For example, in the community of El Troje in the province of Chimborazo, all of the parents and children report

Quichua to be their mother tongue, and 62.5% of the teachers claim to know Quichua, but a much smaller number, only 18.8%, use it regularly in school (King 398).

In addition, students at bilingual schools tend to come from socially and economically marginalized groups. Many of the students have to give up school in order to work and support their families. Therefore it is difficult to retain students beyond primary school. It is not for lack of interest on behalf of the student, but resource and time constraints. Some alternative schools, mostly in Quito, have begun to give scholarships to students only if they do not work and dedicate themselves to studying. Rural schools lack funding to offer such incentives, but many recognized that the socio-economic situation of the indigenous must change before education manages to gain a stronghold in the community.

Hindrances to the Acceptance of Quichua

While bilingual programs have been shown to be effective, educators and political groups still have to work towards creating positive associations with Quichua. A first step is to teach non-indigenous students about indigenous culture, history, and language in order to diffuse negative stereotypes. In 1994, the Board of Education, as part of reforms to the Law of Education, agreed to include some topics related to the indigenous peoples of the country in the national curriculum. These 12 thematic topics include: “different Ecuadorian cultures, family and community habits, myths and legends, worldviews, ancestral technical knowledge, health and sickness, ethics, production systems, familial, social and external organization, festivities and ceremonies, values and their maintenance, and social and economic changes (King 377).

However, these subjects are not always included in classes. The act recognizes the need for all students to be aware of indigenous perspectives, but does not insure that all students do not receive these classes. Also, private schools are not required to comply with this educational act. Many white, middle to upper class, students attend private schools so they may go through the

entire educational system without even a mention of indigenous heritage. In addition, Quichua language programs for non-Quichua students are very rare. Even if a student through their own initiative decides to learn Quichua, it would be very difficult to find classes. There are some Quichua classes offered in Quito, but they are expensive and oriented towards Western travelers.

Signs of Progress

Despite the amount of obstacles, there have been a few signs that Quichua is becoming more accepted by Ecuadorians. For example, Ex-president Jaime Roldós gave his inaugural address of 1978 in Quichua. In this case, the use of Quichua was to reach out to the indigenous constituency and improve his ratings. Another example is that in 2000 a coup was led against ex-president Jamil Mahuad by Antonio Vargas, a leading indigenous leader, who declared the overthrow of the president in Quechua. In fact, there was no negative feedback from the crowd that included indigenous, mestizos, and whites (Hornberger Coronel-Molina 35).

In addition to political acceptance, many believe that Quichua is becoming more widely accepted in official contexts (Hornberger and Coronel-Molina 35). For example, Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States was recently translated into Quichua (Conaway 54). Also, many ministries are offering Quichua interpreters on site and translated brochures. Although these are small steps, all are positive indicators that Quichua is becoming more widely accepted throughout Ecuador.

Lessons Learned

Although Ecuador has made many positive gains in the area of bilingual education, it still has much to do in order to assure quality education for the indigenous. The creation of National Directorate of Bilingual Indigenous was crucial in recognizing the need for administration and creating programs. However, the schools themselves and the National Directorate need more funds to be allocated by the government in order to more effectively fulfill its mandate. The

startling lack of qualified teachers needs to be addressed and the government or another organization should consider creating a feasible incentive program that brings teachers into remote areas.

Although bilingual schools have helped students with their linguistic development, they still have done little to correct linguistic shame and stigmatization of Quichua. Curriculum should be introduced that focuses on strengthening individual student's self-esteem and pride in their ethnic and cultural identity. Bilingual education does little for a student if they graduate, still ashamed of speaking their native language and for being indigenous. Also, non-indigenous students should be exposed to the indigenous perspective as a way to lessen stigmatization of Quichua. In order for the language to be fully accepted and integrated into Ecuadorian society, both groups must alter their beliefs and stereotypes.

The United States should learn from these lessons and see what it has in common with Ecuador's experience. Linguistic shame and stigmatization are not foreign concepts and lack of funding is not an unfamiliar story. Also, the tendency of minority language speakers to desert school should be explored and its reasons uncovered and addressed. Sometimes it is easier to criticize and thoughtfully analyze another person than it is to criticize oneself. Therefore, the U.S. should look at this evidence from Ecuador as a means through which to begin to thoughtfully look at itself.

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"Ecuador." *Ecuador Ministry of Tourism*. 2007. 12 Dec. 2007 <<http://www.vivecuador.com/html2/eng/home.htm>>.

Although not an academic source, this website created by the Ecuadorian government gives a good overview of Ecuador. Despite the fact that it is made for tourists, it offers information about Ecuadorian culture, geography, history, politics, and events.

Hornberger, Nancy H. and Serafin Coronel-Molina. "Quechua language shift, maintenance, and revitalization in the Andes: the case for language planning." *International Journal of Sociology of Language*. 2004: 9-67

This article focuses upon the need to create policies that to insure the maintenance of Quechua in Andean countries. The author fears that if nothing is done, then Quechua will become another extinct language. The article also talks about the incorporation of Quechua into popular culture, politics, and education.

Hornberger, Nancy H. "Bilingual Education Policy and Practice in the Andes: Ideological Paradox and Intercultural Possibility." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*. Vol. 31. 2000: 173-201.

A perspective as to how Andean nations can benefit from a national identity that includes multiple identities. Organizations and policies of primarily Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia are explored. The emphasis of this article is interculturality, not linguistics.

Hornberger, Nancy H. "Pupil Participation and Teacher Techniques: Criteria for Success in a Peruvian Bilingual-Education Program for Quechua Children." *International Journal of Sociology of Language*. Vol. 77. 1989: 35-53.

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Moya, Ruth. *Huaca Pachamanta causashca rimai - Los cuentos de cuando las huacas vivían*. Cuenca: Universidad de Cuenca, 1993.

A book in Quechua and Spanish that is compiled of oral histories, legends, poems, and other means of cultural expression from an indigenous perspective.

Silverston-Scher, Melina. *Ethnopolitics in Ecuador. Indigenous Rights and the Strengthening of Democracy*. Coral Gables: North-South Center Press, 2001.

A great book about political incorporation of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. It offers a lot of history and well as field research. It is a good source to use in order to understand the complexities of ethnic relations in Ecuador.