Language and cultural ideologies in indigenous interpreting and translation in Peru

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A state-funded translation policy

- Peruvian legislation forces the state to run a training program for translators and interpreters in indigenous languages (Laws 29785 and 29735).
- For the first time the Peruvian state assumes this responsibility.
- 251 translators and interpreters between 35 indigenous languages and Spanish trained so far.
Framework, data and methodology

• Theoretical framework
  o Activism in translation & interpreting studies (Baker 2006, 2009; Wolf 2012; Angelelli 2012)

• Data and methodology
  o Ethnographic observation; interviews, focus groups (Huaraz, Lima, Quillabamba, Ucayali).
Role duality of the trainees

- The trainees are assigned a dual role by the state: (1) translators-interpreters, (2) language rights promoters.
- The trainees position themselves as “cultural ambassadors” that seek to place in a visible spot their languages and cultures.
- This role implies a set of public activities that yield an emerging activism.
- Activism goes parallel to the state positioning.
Demand for professionalisation

• Ambivalence of the state positioning:
  o It leads to a *close collaboration* between the state and the trainees;
  o It *overloads* the trainees → less time for professionalisation.

• A demand for greater specialisation among some of the trainees.
Language conflictivity

- As “language workers”, the trainees are expected to develop language conflictivity as described in the literature:
  - **Competence** between varieties to gain status as the most appropriate for standardization
  - Links to problems in the process of “consensual approval” of alphabets by Minedu.
Language ideologisation

• Presence of **language ideologies** that potentially affect translation and interpreting processes:
  
  • **Purism**, especially in the Andean realm (Coronel-Molina 2016; Howard 2007; Niño Murcia 1997).
  
  • **Ruralisation** of indigenous languages as a means of cultural and linguistic differentiation (Zavala et al. 2015).
Purism

- “Betsy es la comunicadora que habla mayormente en español. Yo en quechua, **yo manejo más quechua popular que digamos, o sea, quechua... o quechuañol**, lo que dicen, las otras personas. Rodrigo es una persona que maneja más, ya un poco más, bueno, **quechua neto no existe, pero quechua un poco... bien hablado**, no sé, cómo decir, adecuadamente. Y entonces, nosotros los tres hemos hecho un grupo...” (Asunta, Cuzco Quechua, interview, 26/08/15).
Ruralisation of indigenous languages

• “...estamos fracturando económicamente a nuestros hermanos del campo, para que nos puedan, para poderles cumplir un derecho. Siempre digo, por eso: no subyuguemos a los intereses del Estado a nuestros hermanos del campo; más bien que el Estado se subyugue a los intereses de nuestros hermanos del campo, porque ¡favor que hacen nuestros hermanos del campo al preservar una cultura, al fomentar el uso de las lenguas!” (Mercedes, focus group, Huaraz, 20/11/2014).
Linguistic and cultural essentialism

- Essencialization of the links between language, culture and territory (Patrick 2007) is also present among the trainees’ discourses.
- This yields notions of “authenticity” by which the trainees position themselves as representatives of the “essentials” of their culture…
- … or as external to the community of “real speakers” of the indigenous language.
Notions of “authenticity”

• “Otras personas no se interesan; son mis paisanos, pero son aculturados, y no quieren hablar idioma. En cambio a mí, sí; en mis exposiciones de la universidad yo hablaba en mi idioma; me gustaba” (Mauro, focus group, Quillabamba, 28/08/2015).

• “Y hoy día he podido, este... darme cuenta con mucha nostalgia al conversar con la gente que sí es realmente de una comunidad campesina, que sí hablan su quechua, decirles: ‘Hablen, hagan esto por ustedes’...” (Mercedes, Huaraz, 20/11/2014).
Concluding remarks

• A linguistic and cultural activism seems to be emerging among the trainees.

• This activism is different from that described on Translation Studies and on the study of indigenous movements in Latin America.

• Theoretical and empirical advances in the study of language ideologies can shed light on how is this emerging activism evolving.

• Crucially, in points that counter the intercultural values that inspire the training initiative.