

# 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
  - Activism in translation & interpreting studies (Baker 2006, 2009; Wolf 2012; Angelelli 2012)
  - Auto-representation & indigenous movements (Patrick 2007; Warren & Jackson 2003; Graham 2003)
  - Language ideologies (Woolard 2012; Irvine & Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2006, 2000; Siegel 2006)
- Data and methodology
  - 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:
  - It leads to a **close collaboration** between the state and the trainees;
  - 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.