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Inge Sichra  
*PROEIB Andes*

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Transcending or Strengthening Quechua's Emblematic Value: Language Identity  
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# Transcending or Strengthening Quechua's Emblematic Value: Language Identity in Cochabamba

Inge Sichra

*PROEIB Andes*<sup>1</sup>

Using an analysis of census data and personal narratives by Quechua intellectuals and activists, this paper questions the assumption on the part of linguists that language planning is necessary for the survival of an oral, indigenous language in a modern, urban environment. Current uses and emblematic values of Quechua in the bilingual city of Cochabamba, Bolivia are examined.

## Introduction

Indigenous presence in urban areas, capitals and metropolitan cities in Latin American countries is not new. What might be changing is the increasing visibility of indigenous culture and language that is taking place due to democratization processes in the past decades, ethnic movements, structural reforms and constitutional changes promoted by governments in this era of neoliberalism and globalization. It must also be noted that rural migration to the cities is becoming a most common phenomenon in Latin America and around the world. Recognition of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in Latin American rurality must now move toward urban context. This necessitates several actions, starting from the simple recognition of diversity, through census data, to the treatment of indigenous languages in urban spaces and education through language planning. This context also includes, as always, intercultural conflicts between traditional hegemonic white and *mestizo* sectors of society and indigenous migrants that challenge the historical racial and cultural discrimination.

This work begins by presenting a socio-linguistic panorama of Bolivia (Andean languages, especially Quechua) and of the city of Cochabamba with data from the last censuses as well as a short description of privileged spaces and functions of indigenous languages in the town. The second part considers three life stories in order to analyze different adaptation strategies of Quechua to an urban space, both in terms of the

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<sup>1</sup>Programa de Formación en Educación Intercultural Bilingüe para los Países Andinos

functionality of the language, and of the identity speakers assign to it and to themselves as bilingual individuals in a milieu of diglossia. The theoretical assumption is also twofold: 'life history' is not only a methodological tool but an instrument of questioning academic "certainties" by particularizing what is considered a general and established, or "proven", knowledge and by giving the voice to the individuals concerned. Second, language modernization as part of a theory of positivist language planning has to be revised and give way to an ecological approach where the speakers are the main actors and engineers of their language.

My research questions linguistic and academic assumptions that a native language needs to be modernized and to overcome diglossia in order to subsist, for even people with a high level of linguistic awareness and loyalty prioritize traditional and ideological functions instead of innovative ones. The need to overcome social spheres of discrimination and the domestic use historically established for indigenous languages is not clearly perceived by bilingual speakers.<sup>2</sup>

### The Context

#### *Brief Sociolinguistic Overview of Bolivia (Andean Languages)*

Bolivia has had three censuses in the last 29 years: 1976, 1992 and 2001. This fact, despite all the deficiencies that characterize a census that registers the competition between languages of different prestige, allows for an approximate overview of the composition of Bolivian population.

The 2001 census<sup>3</sup> reveals that there is almost the same percentage of Spanish monolinguals (46.8%) as Spanish/indigenous languages bilinguals (40.8%). While the percentage of bilinguals in the population has remained stable in the past 25 years, the percentage of Spanish monolinguals in the population has increased by 10 percent. Conversely, the percentage of indigenous languages monolinguals in the population has decreased by 10%. According to the last census, one tenth of the population is monolingual in indigenous languages.

As for Quechua and Aimara speakers, it should be emphasized that since the Agrarian Reform, bilingualism in the Andean area is no longer an attribute of landowner *mestizo* families settled in the countryside. Bilingualism is no longer caused by Spanish-speakers settled in rural indigenous-language areas but rather by indigenous peoples moving into

<sup>2</sup> I owe this work to Zenobio Siles, Julia Román, Vidal Arratia, and Adán Pari: Thanks for granting me your time, trusting me with your stories, and opening windows to this fascinating world. I wish to thank Valentín Arispe, Fernando Garcés, and Pamela Calla for their enlightening comments and the corrections done to the document. Anita Krainer and Luis Enrique López also took time to review the text. Last but not least, Consuelo Cardozo translated the article into English.

<sup>3</sup> Bolivian population 6 years and older were considered for the linguistic questions of the 2001 census: 6,948,605. Presently, the total Bolivian population is estimated at over 8 million people.

Spanish-speaking cities. It also has to do with the expansion of the educational system and the mass media into rural areas.

Granting as much care to the topic as it deserves, and with no attempt to further the issue of ethnic identity based on language, we can say that in Bolivia the indigenous sector of the population of the Andean region is constituted by monolingual speakers of native languages and by a great percentage of bilingual speakers settled both in rural areas and in urban peripheries. Monolingualism and rurality has ceased to be the main traits of Andean indigenous population in Bolivia, as we will see in the following figures.

To highlight the trend towards bilingualism, I compiled a table with results from three departments<sup>4</sup> (see Table 1). They have been chosen because their capitals, La Paz, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz, with the highest economic levels, are linked by roads known as Bolivia's "main axis."

Table 1  
Comparison of Linguistic Data from Three Departments, Rural and Urban Areas, Population Ages 6 Years and Older, 2001 Census

|                                   | La Paz<br>Urban/Rural <sup>5</sup> | Santa Cruz<br>Urban/Rural | Cochabamba<br>Urban/Rural |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Speak Spanish                     | 97%/72%                            | 99%/88%                   | 96%/60%                   |
| Speak Quechua                     | 7%/9%                              | 13%/20%                   | 58%/92%                   |
| Speak Aymara                      | 51%/87%                            | 4%/1%                     | 8%/5%                     |
| Only speak Spanish                | 48%/11%                            | 78%/61%                   | 42%/7%                    |
| Only speak native language        | 3%/27%                             | 1%/5%                     | 4%/39%                    |
| Speak native language and Spanish | 48%/61%                            | 20%/29%                   | 54%/53%                   |

Source: Own compilation based on INE 2002a, 2002b, 2002c<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bolivia is politically divided into 9 departments, two on the high plateau (La Paz, Oruro), four in the inter-Andean valleys (Chuquisaca, Potosí, Cochabamba, and Tarija), and three in the subtropical and Amazonic region (Santa Cruz, Beni, and Pando).

<sup>5</sup> Rural population refers to settlements of less than 2000 inhabitants.

<sup>6</sup> Some columns only add up to 99 % because of rounding the numbers. Rural Santa Cruz adds up to 95% because of the 5% of foreign migrants like Mennonites and Japanese included in another category: 'Speak foreign language and Spanish'

As can be seen, about half the populations of La Paz and Cochabamba are bilingual, whereas in the department of Santa Cruz, where much colonization takes place, one fifth to one third of the population is bilingual: Figures vary within settlement areas. This last population considered is constituted by, precisely, Andean indigenous language speakers who have gone to the subtropical region in colonizing efforts. From the table, one can deduce that urban areas in the Andean departments of reference are as bilingual as rural areas. On the contrary, the population that is monolingual in an indigenous language very strongly discriminates between urban and rural areas, especially in the department of Cochabamba, where more than a third of the population monolingual in indigenous languages is in the rural area.

*Sociolinguistic Overview of Cochabamba (Andean Languages)*

In Bolivia, as in all Latin American countries, social and economical processes produce an increasing internal migration and the expulsion of rural inhabitants towards urban settlements. Focusing our view on the department of Cochabamba, with its capital, the city of Cochabamba, Table 2 shows the following dynamics: The population of the department of Cochabamba was mostly (63%) rural until the end of the 70s, and became mostly (59%) urban in this decade. The nation’s current percentage of urban population is 62%.

**Table 2**  
**Population of the Department of Cochabamba**

|            | 1976 Census   | 1992 Census   | 2001 Census   |
|------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Urban area | 269,824 (37%) | 580,188 (52%) | 856,409 (59%) |
| Rural area | 451,007 (63%) | 530,017 (48%) | 599,302 (41%) |

Source: Own compilation based on INE 2002d

Historical reasons based on the Spaniards’ rationale of settling in Bolivian territory in order to exploit the mines led some regions to acquire relevance as providers of grains. One of these regions included the valleys of Cochabamba, which acquired a pattern of Spanish, mestizo, and Indian settlements that were much less rigid in reserving spaces for each stratum. From the very beginning, towns and cities in Cochabamba were characterized by bilingual spaces because they housed landed families that used Quechua on a daily basis and thus transmitted it to their children (Sichra 2003). Also the colonial government allowed mestizo settlements in the region’s towns and cities.

If we take into account Quechua and Aimara, according to the 2001 census, more than half (52%) of the city’s population speaks an indigenous language. The bilingual feature of the city has remained constant

during the last three decades, resisting the trend towards Spanish monolingualism and the diminution of monolingualism in indigenous languages. This can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3  
Languages Spoken in the City of Cochabamba, Population 6 Years or Older, Last Three Censuses

|             | Monolingual Spanish | Monolingual Indigenous Language | Bilingual Indigenous Language/ Spanish | Others (Foreign Language) | Total Cercado Population 6 Years and Older |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|
| 1976 Census | 63,233 (34%)        | 8,447 (4%)                      | 112,704 (61%)                          | 1,445 (0.7%)              | 185,829 (100%)                             |
| 1992 Census | 157,096 (44%)       | 6,391 (1.8%)                    | 187,642 (52%)                          | 8,392 (2.3%)              | 359,521 (100%)                             |
| 2001 Census | 205,351 (46%)       | 11,090 (2.5%)                   | 227,756 (51%)                          | 1,866 (0.4%)              | 446,063 (100%)                             |

Source: Own elaboration based on INE 2002a and Albo (1995 Vol. I, p.40-41)

As I mentioned before, the change, albeit slow, is marked by a tendency towards Spanish speaking. Nevertheless, it does present unexpected turns during the dynamic and powerful socio-political processes for which Bolivia is known.

To conclude the view on Cochabamba's multilingual characteristic, I will refer to a recent phenomenon of ethnic reevaluation in the country, which is reflected in the data of the last census and shown in Table 4. Table 4 shows that almost half of the population 15 years and older identify themselves as Quechua. The percentage of ethnic identification (Quechua) is greater than the absence of such reference or mark ("none"). If ethnic categories are added (three first columns), 60% of city dwellers self-identify with indigenous peoples, though not necessarily as indigenous individuals. It can be said that self-identification with indigenous peoples is found in monolingual speakers of indigenous languages (2.5%), bilingual speakers (51%), and a percentage of monolingual Spanish speakers (exactly 6.5%). According to the census, ethnic identification in the city of Cochabamba does not necessarily imply using or mastering an indigenous language.

*Quechua in the City: Self-Regulation in the Absence of Language Policy*

This fruitful ground for language contact and coexistence has not drawn the attention of public educational policies. Although the 1994 Educational Reform fosters bilingual intercultural education in rural

areas where indigenous languages are massively used, urban areas in general, and Cochabamba specifically, have not been incorporated into the aforementioned education policy.<sup>7</sup>

In 2001, out of a total of 274 public education establishments, only 7, administered by a Catholic institution *Fe y Alegría* under a special agreement with the Ministry of Education, offered Quechua in some grades of primary or secondary levels. Curiously enough, it was the private schools that showed a greater disposition to incorporate Quechua in their curricula: 10 out of 89 establishments in 2001! It must be said that these are not official data, they stem from my inquiries for a research study (Sichra 2001). In fact, the Departmental Education Service, SEDUCA, lacks this information. At the post-secondary level, courses in Quechua are offered in some academic departments like Medicine, Engineering, and Agronomy, and require passing a proficiency test. Since 1998, this university has been offering a Master's Degree in Bilingual Intercultural Education for indigenous students from Andean countries (PROEIB Andes), and includes in a curricular area the use and development of indigenous languages, including Quechua.

Despite the fact that Cochabamba is a bilingual city, there are no official policies about language use in public and governmental institutions. Rather, language choice is determined by the need to communicate or by individual speakers' convictions or stubbornness. There are governmental measures that have an indirect effect in the sudden need to use indigenous languages in the city's public spaces. Something of the sort happened during Sánchez de Lozada's government in 1996, when payment of a life-long annual pension was decreed (with money obtained from selling half the shares of public companies, the so called 'capitalization') for all Bolivians 65 years and older. What ensued was an agglomeration of thousands of senior citizens, monolingual indigenous language speakers, in certain banks. The banks' personnel found themselves in a tight spot trying to overcome linguistic barriers, unusual in this space. Another example is the Popular Participation policy that creates rural municipalities all over the country. These municipalities have

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<sup>7</sup> The Educational Reform in Bolivia, decreed in July, 1994, gradually introduces Bilingual Intercultural Education, EIB, into the national education system. The corresponding Law 1565 stipulates in article 9 two modalities of language in Formal and Alternative Education: "Monolingual in Spanish, and learning another national native language; and bilingual, a national native language as first tongue, and Spanish as the second tongue" (MECyD 1998:16). As for the second modality, the Regulation on Curricula Organization, Art. 12, states: "The curricula for students that are monolingual Spanish speakers, or for those who use this language predominantly, should also include learning and use of a national native language. The National Education Secretary is in charge of stimulating interest in the country's native languages..." (1998:46). The aforementioned Regulation, in its Art. 30, proposes for primary level: "Promote individual and social bilingualism in students whose mother tongue is Spanish, learning a national native language as a second language...guaranteeing that all the country's students properly and efficiently use Spanish as an encounter language, and one of intercultural and inter-ethnic dialogue" (1998:52). For the secondary level, Art. 40 stipulates the same objectives, but also "emphasizing reading comprehension, personal and creative writing, and on understanding how the language works (Spanish)" (1998:57).

Table 4  
Self-Identification with Indigenous Peoples in the City of Cochabamba,  
Population 15 Years and Older, 2001 Census

|       | <i>Quechua</i>   | <i>Aymara</i>   | <i>Guaraná,</i><br><i>Chiquitano,</i><br><i>Moxoño, etc.</i> | <i>None</i>      | <i>Total</i><br><i>Population</i><br><i>15 years</i><br><i>and older</i> |
|-------|------------------|-----------------|--|------------------|--|
| Men   | 77,294<br>(22%)  | 17,151<br>(5%)  | 2,368<br>(0.7%)  | 62,703<br>(18%)  | 159,516<br>(46%)   |
| Women | 89,951<br>(26%)  | 18,033<br>(5%)  | 2,706<br>(0.8%)  | 74,185<br>(22%)  | 184,875<br>(54%)   |
| Total | 167,245<br>(48%) | 35,184<br>(10%) | 5,074<br>(1.5%)  | 136,888<br>(40%) | 344,391<br>(100%)  |

Source: Own elaboration based on INE 2002a

resources to attract substantial numbers of technicians and professionals from multiple disciplines (technology, service, education, construction, etc.) who discover they need to speak Quechua. In the case of the department of Cochabamba, work ads generally require proficiency in Quechua. We do not need to leave the city to witness this need; medical doctors, architects, lawyers, and police officers among others need to at least understand Quechua if they want to communicate with patients, workers, clients, claimants, etc. Construction companies, family enterprises that make clothes and accessories, and factories are, among others, work spaces occupied by indigenous language speakers. Also, speaking indigenous languages in these spaces facilitates communication between the workers themselves and may become the means for group identification.

The mass media produces few programs and spaces in Quechua. Those produced are broadcast at dawn, following the tradition of radios that broadcast in medium wave (to reach the provinces) for rural areas. Lately, a midday program ("*Kancha parlaspa*") that includes morning news has sprung up, appealing to the interests of those who trade agricultural products in markets.

As for written circulation of Quechua, writings available to the public only include commercial ads, Quechua names, or folkloric events. Material written in Quechua has very limited circulation in the city, which is in itself evidence of the lesser importance written indigenous language plays in general its speakers, even in the city. We can only mention the bilingual newspaper *Conosur Ñawpaqman*, published by CENDA

for the provinces lying at the south of the Department of Cochabamba, which is sold in some key newsstands. Publications in Quechua only circulate amidst intellectual environments, in the Academy of Quechua, and in NGOs. In recent years there have been recurrent yet temporary and limited efforts in publishing offprint with chapters of the Spanish/Quechua dictionaries in local newspapers (*Opini3n*) or weekly brochures with local, national, and international news in newspapers in La Paz (*Presencia, La Raz3n*).

The space, par excellence, for Quechua is the *Cancha*, the vast market/fair in the city that gathers 100,000 merchant families on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when they install and occupy their stands so a similar number of buyers can stop to consult. We also have to mention the weekly fairs set up in the last years in almost every municipal district; these have taken Quechua at least once a week to predominantly Spanish-speaking areas.<sup>8</sup>

An interesting phenomenon is the presence of indigenous languages in the public transportation service very wide-spread throughout the city, and between Cercado and the nearby provinces. Daily commuting of provincial people to the city, of people in peripheral districts to the *Cancha* or downtown, and from one cardinal point of the city to another is facilitated by transportation routes that have been 'opened' in a sort of free market with no greater restrictions than those self-imposed by transport unions. Public transportation is also increasingly being used by sectors of the Spanish-speaking population whose income has been reduced by the country's current economic crisis, and who thus have stopped taking taxis as they used to do before. In this way, Quechua and Aimara have more spaces to disseminate and enter into contact with Spanish.

### *Research questions*

With the statistics and language use patterns presented in the previous section, one can understand why visitors from other Andean regions express admiration for the city of Cochabamba's notorious, ever present bilingualism.<sup>9</sup> We could say it is evidence and condition of the persistence of Quechua in urban areas.

How does this evidence match Jon Landaburu's (2003: 155) following reflection, which I came across last year, precisely in Cochabamba:

What has to be conquered is precisely the *world of the city* (my emphasis); therein lies the challenge for languages like Quechua and Aimara that are spoken by many people. It is crucial that they face modernity and,

<sup>8</sup> For more precise cartography of Quechua and Aimara bilingualism, see also Alb3 (1995).

<sup>9</sup> PROEIB Andes, Formation in Bilingual Intercultural Education Programme (*Programa de Formaci3n en 'Educaci3n Intercultural Bilingüe'*) for the Andean countries was established in Cochabamba, among other reasons, because the city offered a "laboratory for languages."

somehow, enter into it and develop spaces of use, because if they are limited to rural spaces, where the rural world still goes on, they will continue finding hindrances. If these languages are not given any potential for modern use (from the traditional language to modern uses), they will remain restricted there and could disappear. There are also coexistence modalities, but unviable and not possible: I think that languages like Aimara and Quechua have potential, though....<sup>10</sup>

The argument is that the number of speakers and the language's entry into the city is not enough to guarantee its survival, for it would remain as a language oppressed by diglossia, distanced from "modernity." Indigenous languages must conquer the "world of the city," become as modern as a city requires.

After reviewing nine cases of language policy among minorities in different continents, Eriksen (1991: 42) concludes that:

Modernization – including formal education, occupational diversification, social mobility and internal communication is a necessary prerequisite for linguistic minorities to survive in the long term. The psychological pain, inferiority complexes and difficulties in social mobility inflicted on individuals by linguistic hegemony can be alleviated only if the minority group asserts its own language as a full-fledged alternative to the hegemonic language.

Here the author states that a minority language has to become equal, so to speak, to the hegemonic language if the linguistic minority wants to survive. However, it may be that this viewpoint simply shows that linguists place a higher value on the modernity of standardized written languages than on native indigenous languages with an oral tradition. The following research questions arise:

1. What is the function, meaning and identity they give to their language in the city of Cochabamba?
2. What do the speakers of Quechua themselves think of the present value and future of their minority language in urban context?

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<sup>10</sup> Original Spanish version: "Lo que hay que conquistar es, precisamente, el mundo de la ciudad, allí está el desafío, el desafío para lenguas como el quechua y el aimara que son lenguas habladas por muchas personas. Es importante que entren a la modernidad y, de alguna manera, se metan en la modernidad, desarrollen espacios de uso en la modernidad porque si sólo están limitadas a usos rurales, donde funciona todavía el mundo rural, van a seguir con dificultades, pero si no se potencia el uso a usos modernos (desde la lengua tradicional a usos modernos), pues quedarán restringidas allí, y de pronto desaparecen. También hay modalidades de convivencia, pero que son viables y posibles: pero yo creo que una lengua como el aimara y el quechua tiene una potencialidad."

3. Why, if 48% of the urban population, as table 4 shows, self-identify as Quechuas, does the language maintain its “oppressed” condition and remain far away from modernity?

These questions guide the second part of this work, as I move between linguists’ “certainties” and the meanings the concerned people attribute to their language. I explore the experiences and perceptions of people involved in this issue in order to understand the identity impressed on Quechua by individuals with a high linguistic consciousness given the evidence that this language is (physically speaking) *in* the city but not in the “world of the city,” as Landaburu states above. It is of interest, in the last analysis, to establish whether the modernity/non-modernity dichotomy is perceived by the speakers as a constitutive and problematic feature of linguistic reality, or whether another or other dichotomies emerge, from the speaker’s point of view, that recreate complementary and exclusive worlds in an intercultural space.

### **Quechua Identity in the City: Three Construction Strategies**

#### *Methodological Framework*

The term ‘life history’ (instead of biography) stems from the work by W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki (1920) when they let a Polish peasant tell about his life in his country of origin before the First World War and his migration to Germany and finally Chicago. This life history could establish and make comprehensive the complex relationships between the social and the individual structure, the role of the Polish rural socialization patterns in the adaptation to social and individual life in North America and the psychosocial processes that underlie social and individual change and adaptation. In this case, as G.W. Allport (1942) establishes, the ‘life history’ was *total* in the sense that the whole life was captured, so to speak. The other type of ‘life history’ is the *thematic* one, by which the researcher follows a specific theme during the life history. This allows for a thematic comparison of histories of different lives. In the vein of Fraser (1970), Ferrarotti (1981), Heller (1970), the ideological and epistemological principles that sustain the sociological and anthropological method of ‘life histories’ (as part of oral history) constitute a global critique to the actual academic and scientific order, defining new study objects, defying the sense of rigidity and the extreme specialization of the social sciences, proposing a sort of intellectual agitation (Pujadas 1992: p.10). One of the effects is the focalization in the individual as protagonist and social actor that defies the pretended objective knowledge of

academia and technocracy.

According to Gee, Michaels and O'Connor (1992: 236), "1) human discourse is rule-governed and internally structured; 2) it is produced by speakers who are ineluctably situated in a sociohistorical matrix, whose cultural, political, economic, social and personal realities shape the discourse; and 3) discourse itself constitutes or embodies important aspects of that sociohistorical matrix." As the authors state, discourse reveals and shapes personal experience. As I am dealing with socially situated texts, I am interested in depicting ideologies that the three men express while they go into their life stories, values and principles that have implications for the distribution of power in this particular society. The social activities in which the participants are involved during their early childhood, second socialization, professionalization and working experience are inherently ideological insofar as they establish roles that they have to assume as members of the society. "These values and viewpoints are often defined relative to other values and viewpoints that are to be taken up by others in subordinate or superior roles or are relative to values and viewpoints in other, often opposing social activities." (Gee, Michaels & O'Connor 1992: 238). Although the participants have unique life trajectories, the narrated experiences are not isolated, idiosyncratic events but part of certain social structures. Following Richardson (1997), I assume that biography, in this case 'life history' acquires political meaning and significance.

### *Participants*

In order to transcend the knowledge of the functional aspect of Quechua in the city of Cochabamba and recognize the symbolic aspect that its speakers assign to the language, I explored the perceptions of three native speakers. Between March and June, 2003, I had the opportunity to discuss this research topic in-depth with Vidal Arratia, Adán Pari, and Zenobio Siles, as well as with the latter's wife, Julia Román; all of them had been acquaintances or friends of mine before setting up their families. Their children range from 1 year and a half to 14 years old. Their ages are around 40; they know each other but have few, sporadic opportunities for contact and only due to work.

Vidal and Adán come from the department of Potosí, and Zenobio, from Cochabamba. Vidal Arratia finished the Master's Degree course in Bilingual Intercultural Education at PROEIB Andes. Since 2004, he has been teaching at the Institute for intercultural bilingual teachers in Potosi. Nothing in his appearance identifies him as indigenous. Adán Pari also has a Master's Degree in Bilingual Intercultural Education, and was working at the time of the interview as Coordinator of the Native Languages Reading and Writing Training Programme for Teachers (Ministry of Education-PROEIB Andes). In May 2003, he was named

National Coordinator for Bilingual Intercultural Education at the Ministry of Education. A long braid and his hat render Adán an eye-catcher, because they distinguish him as Quechua. Zenobio Siles is journalist and editor at the Quechua/Spanish bilingual newspaper *Conosur Ñawpaqman*, published by CENDA, a Bolivian non-governmental organization. He usually wears the sandals that *campesinos* (small farmers) use in the valleys' region of Bolivia.

The subjects combine the following criteria: They are native Quechua people who reside in Cochabamba; they share a declared language loyalty evidenced throughout their work and education performance; and they are recognized in their professional and social environments as promoters of Quechua language and culture—as an employee that works with educational programs, a social communicator, and a journalist. The criteria of high linguistic consciousness established to select these subjects was most important, since it was exactly the trait that I consider central in the maintenance of bilingualism in general and in urban spaces, in particular. This research was considered an explorative attempt to grasp evidence of prevailing symbolic value of Quechua in the city and only was carried out among male subjects, leaving out 1) female subjects; 2) subjects from other sectors of urban society, of other ages and positions.

Despite different social origins, these three men have language acquisition, learning and use at home in common. As we shall see, a basic aspect we recovered is “key” experiences, detected by the interviewees themselves as landmarks in their increasing awareness and identity construction.

### *Inquiry Methods*

The Spanish-led conversation with each subject took two to three hours, was introduced by an explanation of the purpose of the research and structured by questions regarding childhood memories of Quechua acquisition and use, crucial experiences during school and youth with language(s), special anecdotes or thoughts while being at the university that marked their language attitude and identity and present concerns as members of society, professionals, family heads, individuals. The three men read the first extensive draft of the research report, only one corrected me in one interpretation and no one asked me to use pseudonyms.

The material that documents this part of the work has been kept essentially oral, that is, very little editing was done to present it in writing other than to suppress interjections, redundancies, stammering, and pauses. In this way, I seek to elaborate the narrative with the least possible interference so the reader can compare it with my interpretation, judging the latter, not the former. Perhaps the greatest bias I introduce is the (difficult) selection I had to do to limit the volume of the work as well as to organize significant parts to meet my goal. The English translation

of testimonies obviously is only a rudimentary approximation to the vivid histories I recorded, rich connotations and also ways of saying things that reflect emotions, concerns, and joy might not be seen in the present version.<sup>11</sup> As to the rest, one must take into account that in recording a life story, omissions and silences are also revealing.

### *Theoretical Framework*

A basic focus of this research is language planning, specifically the concept of "language modernization." For Ferguson, it is part of a trio of goals for the development of language in society, together with standardization<sup>12</sup> and graphization:<sup>13</sup>

The modernization of a language may be thought of as the process of its becoming the equal of other developed languages as a medium of communication; it is in a sense the process of joining the world community of increasingly intertranslatable languages recognized as appropriate vehicles of modern forms of discourse. (1968:32)

Equality of languages as instruments of communication and intertranslatability (if such a word exists) are the main objectives of this language planning aspect, despite uniqueness of languages, language and speech communities in this "world community." The author establishes two aspects of the process of modernization, "*the expansion of the lexicon*" of the language by new words and expressions and "*the development of new styles and forms of discourse*" [italics original]. The assumption is that modernization will create demands for language change and demands for standardization, both requisites and at the same time motors for a written form and use of language. Linguists of the Prague School (e.g. Havránek 1964 [1932]) referred to this aspect as "intellectualization." These terms stem from the time when a state had to have a national language in order to belong to the "developed world" (shortly before and after World War II). Even if times have changed and to be part of the developed world implies for a state, in the first place, entering the globalized market and showing specific economic behavior and parameters, language planning (revitalization) of minority (and indigenous) languages is still centered around these concepts, as Landaburu (2003) and Eriksen (1991) expressed above.

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<sup>11</sup> For the complete Spanish life histories cf. Sichra, I (2005) "Trascendiendo o fortaleciendo el valor emblemático del quechua: identidad de la lengua en la ciudad de Cochabamba" en Serafín Coronel-Molina y Linda Grabner-Coronel (eds.) *Lenguas e identidades en los Andes: Perspectivas ideológicas y culturales*. Quito, Ecuador: Abya Yala. 211-250.

<sup>12</sup> "The process of acceptance of one variety of a language throughout the speech community as a supradialectal norm" (Ferguson 1968: 31)

<sup>13</sup> Establishing or improving an orthographic system.

*Life Histories*

*The Persistency of the Community*<sup>14</sup>/*City Dichotomy*. Adán grew up in the countryside near the town of Potosí, went to secondary school in the city of Potosí, studied at the University in Sucre (constitutional capital of Bolivia) and also at the University in Cuenca, Ecuador. He returned to Bolivia to start working at the Ministry of Education in the area of intercultural bilingual education. He expresses with great clarity that his native community is his frame of reference:

I don't know if I am, many have told me so, and they don't even believe me. Within my parents is relapse and this won't change, going to my community. I will be promoting these things for some time, but if I have any chance of going back to my community; I will go to my community, that is, that is my dream. Precisely because culture and language is being kept through the family, because if I am not going back to my community, for that responsibility my mother herself has given me, I will sever that root (A.P).

This life plan, still envisioned as "my dream," does not give Adán stability while he performs in spaces far from the community. A strong internalized family pressure is perceived as responsibility towards the community inasmuch as it relates to him:

I am in a dilemma; this situation is a problem for me. I understand that from here I can work, promote the indigenous issue, but I have this family responsibility that I can't drop so easily. I have questioned myself quite a lot on why I entered these academic circles, all this, but I felt sorry of not being able to be, in the same way [strong emphasis] developing in the context of my community and with the community (A.P).

Adán feels uncultivated family ties translate as distance, with the resulting sense of desertion and loss –of the indigenous pole and of the affective base of his cultural and existential pattern. His distance from the community, on the other hand, seems to be felt like being in an exile that occasional visits might not help overcome:

I go to the community, they ask me to do many things and I have forgotten how. As an example, they put me to sow and they say 'Ha! You are *chalequeando*,<sup>15</sup> so why can't you do it any more?' I don't know anything about recent knowledge on sowing and time management, so people

<sup>14</sup>Indigenous community is the basis of the Andean productive system. It is usually part of an extensive family net (*ayllu*) and implies obligations to its members, as well as rights over communal land.

<sup>15</sup>A Quechua term that means "doing something clumsily."

criticize me... I even feel left out of the community. I think I already am on the verge between being and not being, I am more here, city dweller (A.P).

Moving between both worlds, the community and the city, does not leave Adán indifferent, and, at least in his testimony, in the end he does not decide himself for the world of the city, nor for closing the distance between both or making them somehow complementary:

The society of this city does not mean enough for me to say 'I'll stay here'. I am becoming more of the community, I have a lot to do and this is the most important thing, I don't know. This world here has not convinced me, it does not attract me enough to say 'I am going to stay'. Those are two things that make me think of my community every day. I have also been inside this, deeply involved in the rather worldly issue of this consumerist system, but why do I need to make so much money? In my community I eat, I have clothes, I have things and I live better, should we say, society-wise (A.P).

The future of Quechua, the objective of its linguistic planning, is restricted to the community environment so that it can be made into a municipal, local environment with indigenous characteristics, that is, distinctive and bearing rural specificities.

I live and dream with this idea of promoting the use of the native language in the municipality, if in the municipality we are all council *curacas* that can read and write, and those who do not know will learn, do a literacy course and with that impulse from the municipality we can promote literacy among our families, teacher training, disseminate through the municipality more documents in native languages. I see it like that, maybe too much of a dream, a much more operative local agency...In the countryside, Quechua is where the roots are (A.P).

There is an ambivalence in Adán's testimonies in respect to the presence of Quechua (identity and language) in the city: He lives there but he doesn't feel Quechua there. He reserves a specific geographical place of origin to the indigenous language, where functionality and symbolic value stems from the community; on the other hand, he is engaged in – or “dreams” about – promoting modern functions and uses of Quechua like literacy.

*Complementary urban Spaces for Quechua and Spanish.* Vidal, also native from rural Potosí and an emigrant like Adán, also keeps an awareness of his origins in a Quechua community, strengthened by a certain family responsibility based on the heritage of cultural wisdom. Nevertheless, unlike Adán's, Vidal's family shows different positions as to the value of Quechua and Quechua cultural practices, situations that can help seek

personal definitions for accepting and being Quechua in the city:

I have another brother who used to say, 'Quechua, what for? Quechuas don't exist anymore, you are the only ones, no more!' For example, I was *coando*,<sup>16</sup> we used to do this because my mother was an expert *curandera* and 'no more, these things make us look bad, I won't come to visit you anymore'. Back then, sometimes, maybe it was bad, maybe good, there was always a doubt, not like now, now they can say whatever they want, but maybe before...(V.A).

Vidal's strategy is to somehow reproduce rural life within the city to feel at ease in both worlds without having to choose one and exclude the other. To do this, he even promotes a neighborhood movement that will grant him legitimacy and "social basis":

They say I represent the neighbors because I speak in Quechua. There is a foreigner in the neighborhood, architect, lawyer, I don't know, they say he scolds them in English, but the guy is careful not to speak to me. I have been inimical to their making the Abra bridge, instead, the gentleman had said it was development, our children will improve, and I tell him 'no! I have come to live in the Abra because it was countryside and I wanted cows, closer to the city of course, but because here it's still possible to live in community, in *ayllu*,<sup>17</sup> there still are possibilities... It looks as if, when people don't place themselves in certain places, this won't do with youngsters. If I didn't speak Quechua, it would be a problem... (V.A).

In another interview for a subsequent work on strategies of language transmission, Vidal refers to the neighborhood as his daughter's "adoptive family," which, along with the nuclear family, guarantees her being exposed to Quechua during early childhood. This neighborhood net substitutes the original *ayllu* and at the same time allows for a recreation of Quechua culture tools (like, for example, the language) that are useful in a bilingual city like Cochabamba, a place where social spaces are clearly limited and where mastering the native tongue gives certain advantages – once necessary sources of acknowledgement have been obtained, like education, position at work, etc.

Since January 2001, Vidal has been engaged in a postgraduate course in bilingual intercultural education at the Universidad Mayor de San Simón.

PROEIB has given me more freedom of action so I can feel at ease and devote myself to rescue. There is a whole group of people doing this, it

<sup>16</sup> From *q'uwa*, a plant used as incense, prepared in renovation rituals like Carnival, All Saints Day, etc. This ritual is practiced in the city the first Friday of every month.

<sup>17</sup> Quechua term for 'a community with strong blood ties'.

is not only me. We are recreating Quechua and people help us. We are motivated and people let themselves be motivated. Whatever your space, you can recreate culture (V.A).

As a full time student, Vidal dedicates his new knowledge and the ensuing academic reflection to educational activities with youngsters. He is aware that his social position allows him to transgress certain norms and depart from certain ways, motivating his milieu to assert its identity.

With youngsters I work at the weekends. I have done my homework (from the Master's Degree course) with them; I have practiced what I have studied. They are in charge of exploiting those things; none of them has studied, and they have not graduated from school. At night they go to an eatery and I take a video and I play the video while they start to talk, those youngsters are starting to learn. ...they know I am like this and they now when they go to my house; for two years now they have known that with me Quechua is spoken, that is, it is also status, it is position, it is profession, it is economic possession, it is all that (V.A).

He has seen a response in the youngsters, and that alone motivates Vidal to reproduce in some way the process of searching for a position, directed towards establishing cultural capital of different origins.

Vidal's attitude towards functions and domains of Quechua promotes the entrance and permanence of Quechua in the city and, most important, language pride of the youth in a kind of search for their own space as opposed to the pre-established Spanish space. Specific cultural traits are highlighted to promote Quechua identity (and language) in the city, complementary to the Spanish one.

*The Persistency of Societal Contradictions.* Zenobio has not left the city. It has been his community which transformed itself when it joined the constant expansion of city margins towards agricultural areas. Without Adán's ambivalence, produced by contradictions between day to day urban referents and his Quechua identity and life style, and without Vidal's effort to complement cultures and languages from a multiculture-type compartmentalized view, Zenobio restores the political character of Quechua identity, derived from social conflicts between dominant and dominated sectors which the Agrarian reform has only managed to increase in the valleys and make more noticeable in the city. His perception addresses the productive basis issue, politically recognized in the valleys and expressed by the term 'peasant'—introduced by the 1952 Revolution to replace the word 'Indian'.

Because peasants are seen as the cause of Bolivia's backwardness, that's what they say. If we are the reason for the country's backwardness, who are the ones managing the country? They are people who have more land, a greater economy. They have always been politicians and are

never peasants. That is why we can't blame the peasants; they are the ones producing the food the entire society eats! (Z.S).

Every day Zenobio and his family confront the effects of a stratified society and resent the assimilation strategy of denying one's identity:

In the city you see a lot of peasant people; just because they say peasants are the reason for Bolivia's backwardness, they become even worse than them...I have seen many lousy cases, I have seen families who are more Quechuas than we; when they have seen Spanish, they don't want to know about Quechua. For them it is an insult to speak in Quechua, they don't feel at ease. My neighbors are like that (Z.S).

Zenobio and his family have felt the discrimination brought about by the rural/urban dichotomy and cultured despite the fact that the city is based on a strong agricultural culture. As Zenobio's wife mentioned, the people who rent the apartment over their house placed a sign that read 'whether you are urban or peasant, don't leave garbage lying around' after having found garbage on the stairs; they had assumed Zenobio's daughters had done it. "No other people were suspected but us" Zenobio added laconically.

His political awareness sensitizes him to remember anecdotes that only strengthen his efforts to denounce injustices and provoke changes in public institutions. The following example shows this:

Florencio<sup>18</sup> himself had problems concerning his children; he brought them to school, and they made a big problem. They didn't want to receive them. 'You are from the countryside, you are backward, and you have to repeat all the grades as from first grade'. It is really serious if teachers themselves have that mentality, therein lies the problem. We insisted, and in the end he went to talk with the Director of Education. Since they know him, know who he is, he is, on top of that, deputy for a Member of Parliament, the director begged for forgiveness, I believe he did it on his knees, 'no, I apologize, they made a mistake'. But in many schools there is that rejection. Just because a child comes from the countryside does not mean he/she should be treated like that (Z.S).

For Zenobio, language is not necessarily the bearer of ethnic identity, but rather it asserts the culture of the city's migrant population and originates in "being of the community":

In the cities I believe Quechua is difficult. If everybody spoke Quechua, it would be less and less of a problem; but the fact that they still feel in their hearts that they are Quechuas and belong to Quechua communities,

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<sup>18</sup> Florencio Alarcón, regional peasant leader, has been a deputy Member of Parliament for over a year, a member of the Movement towards Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo*, MAS). He was recently elected as President of the Education Council for the Quechua Nation.

even when they don't speak Quechua, that stays, that makes them go on being Quechuas, that does not leave them. (Z.S)

Despite some differences, Zenobio shares with Adán his plan of moving to the countryside eventually, where the air is not yet polluted, where one could live from the land, in a healthy environment full of trees. This he expressed when I thought our conversation was over and had turned off the recorder. He also portends the possibility that the city of Cochabamba will remain bilingual beyond any process of loss of tongues, as long as a linguistic planning is applied to the educational area to include reading and writing in Quechua. It is an allusion to the need of modernizing Quechua so that it may cease being exclusively oral, and thus raise its prestige and recognition:

If we examine Cochabamba, I believe that half of the people speaks bilingual, that is, speaks two languages, but, let's say, 50 years from now they may be monolingual but in Spanish. That occurs in communities, in the families themselves one is not born anymore into Quechua. But if, on the other hand, we start to read and write in Quechua, if that is furthered, I think that reading and writing in Quechua would start to strengthen the language and it would be used more. Because, since children are somehow already Quechua descendants, they are also children of Quechuas, they are always listening to their parents speak Quechua in the streets, many people speak in the *micros*,<sup>19</sup> they are always speaking it... (Z.S)

For Zenobio, Quechua identity is bound to class identity. Racism, discrimination and exclusion from public (Spanish) institutions are reasons enough to strengthen counterprestige, supported by an ideology of resistance and reaffirmation of the right to be different not only at country level but also in urban context. His resistance and class consciousness also guides his family and personal positioning in daily life, as the anecdote about the litter in the staircase shows.

### **Just some Inkings of the Bilingual Complexity**

Bilingualism in the city of Cochabamba is a social fact analyzed in this work from quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Although Quechua is in the city, the referents of the language are not of the "world" of the city. Accepting the complementarities of urban social spaces, supporting the persistence of the community/city dichotomy, and stressing or disclosing social contradictions are three possible strategies in the process of constructing and reconstructing the language in the city. Modernizing the language to render it permanent and grant it a future does not seem to be relevant; what does appear relevant is its symbolic significance.

<sup>19</sup> Bolivian term for a common type of bus

Quechua's emblematic value is strengthened by the capacity to resist the "world of the city," with no evidence of the effort to transcend that value in order to propitiate the language's modernization. Writing Quechua and producing written material is seen as positive; it is not something these speakers would be opposed to, but it doesn't seem to be a condition or requisite to Quechua entering the world of the city. Speakers with a high linguistic awareness who identify with their Quechua origin do not feel the need to overcome the condition of diglossia of the native language, nor do they see it as a task at hand, directing their efforts to promoting symbolic functions of the language instead of working on inventing a modern Quechua corpus.

Thereby, Quechua activists and cultors generate another type of linguistic ideology than the one constructed from the academic perspective. It is perhaps in its opposition to Spanish, and not in the equivalence of functionality and social valuation, that Quechua can develop in the city and its world through approaches other than modernization. In this case, the separating function of standardized languages (Garvin & Mathiot 1968) also applies to not standardized languages of oral tradition (Sichra 2003), strengthened by the symbolic function that indigenous languages play in these days as ethnic markers (Barth 1969).

With respect to local forms of knowledge that frame linguistic awareness, I agree with Canagarajah (2002: 257): "The local will always have a questioning effect on established paradigms, deriving from the nonsystematized, unorthodox and simply messy features of its existential practice."

Only the beginning of a pending task has been marked by this work. It should extend to explore other pieces of the city's Quechua mosaic, for example: speakers willing to deny their origin in order to foster change into Spanish, Quechua speakers who do not identify with indigenous peoples, and speakers who seek what their parents left behind when becoming city dwellers. Future research must also consider women, since their role as language and culture preservers is well established, while they also show tendencies of favoring assimilation to the hegemonic society. All of them are detectable sectors of the population in an analysis of the censuses' results, as was outlined in the first part of this work. Finally, comparative work in other Andean and Latin American countries could shed light on the diversity of language use, attitudes and identities in urban context. It might be very revealing to relate these findings to Spanish use in Bolivia, specifically to the restricted Spanish literacy in the country as such and specifically in the urban context. The extended oral character this language has acquired despite being an instrument to social mobility defies its common status as a prestige language, establishing it more as a *lingua franca*.

In this way, and right in these times of recognition of linguistic rights as part of an ecological perspective of languages, we could with Ricento (2000: 16-23) get to a different understanding of language planning, where:

the key variable which separates the older, positivist technicist approaches from the newer critical/postmodern ones is agency, i.e. the role(s) of individuals and collectivities in the processes of language use, attitudes, and ultimately policies.

The center of this sociolinguistic paradigm is not language as such but linguistic behavior and speakers' identities.

*Inge Sichra holds a Ph.D. in sociolinguistics from the University of Vienna. Since 1996, she has been a national advisor of PROEIB Andes (Program in Bilingual Intercultural Education for the Andean Region) and academic coordinator. She is a professor in the PROEIB Andes Master's Program at the Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where she teaches Linguistics and Sociolinguistics and is responsible for the research area on Urban Bilingualism in the Andean region.*

Email: [isichra@proeibandes.org](mailto:isichra@proeibandes.org)

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