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Intercultural bilingual education in the urban Andes

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Background:
While in many countries, especially in urban settings, the linguistic vitality of indigenous languages is diminishing, Quechua and Spanish in urban Cusco remains strong. Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) is a language planning model derived from the indigenous movement in Latin American countries, which strives to teach two languages in their own and separate cultural contexts. However, IBE application has been criticized for attempting to normalize Quechua from a purely Spanish-speaking context, stripping it of its agency and cultural power, prioritizing the formal grammaticality. Thus, this investigation seeks to analyze the actual state of bilingualism in Cusco and the effects of IBE pedagogy in education students of a Quechuan background.

Objectives:
This study was designed with three objectives in mind: Through usage information and interviews of students at the Pukllasunchis Institute, the contact between Quechua and Spanish can be observed.

VITALITY

• Confirming the vitality of bilingualism in various language domains and in all parts of the social networks.
• In bilingual still prevalent in all domains and with all members of their social network in Cusco.

VALORIZATION

• Generating the affection and respect felt toward both Quechua and Spanish in this population of bilingual students.
• How are both languages valued by these bilingual students?

PEDAGOGY

• Observing the effects of IBE pedagogy application in the language attitudes of the students.
• How has IBE and its pedagogy affected the thinking and language patterns of these future educators?

Methodology:
The data for this study was collected through interviews in both a personal and group setting with some of the participants and a questionnaire completed by all the participants. The interview questions allowed participants to reflect on their experiences speaking and learning both languages, linguistic discrimination and the effects of IBE. The questionnaire had various parts, which collected demographic information, as well as usage data and value judgments.

Analysis:
Along with gauging the students’ language choices within their social networks, they were asked questions to observe the value that they attach to each or both languages. These included judgments on utility, beauty, cultural heritage and self-identity. When asked questions that related to affective value, the vast majority of students demonstrated their attachment to Quechua. This confirms what most sociologists that have previously studied this region have often theorized: part of Quechua’s survival and development is largely due to the positive affective value that its speakers have for the language. The data collected from these questionnaires served to complement the interviews conducted with a portion of the students.

IBE pedagogy at the Pukllasunchis Institute is taught with the goal of application at their own primary and secondary school in Cusco itself, as well as their programs in rural zones and other institutions. Their school in Cusco was the first to decide to teach Quechua to the Spanish-speaking population in the area, calling their program “Intercultural Education in the City.” Not only does Pukllasunchis teach this pedagogy, but it develops and publishes materials for other educators seeking to adopt it into their own methods.

The students interviewed also expressed their appreciation for this program. Calling from past experiences, they spoke about linguistic discrimination and how Pukllasunchis and the particular IBE pedagogy it expounds, helped them to maintain and strengthen their pride in their language and cultural practices.

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