

## A Historical Overview of Linguistic Imperialism and Resistance in Peru

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### Abstract

The architecture of Cusco today is mainly Inca foundations with Spanish constructions on top. This can be seen as an analogy of the imposition of Spanish language, culture, and political and social institutions on the Inca society, while the indigenous culture and language survive as part of the foundation of the modern culture. The linguistic and cultural diversity of Peru has been subjected to linguistic imperialism on the part of the Spanish conquerors for centuries. Overt and covert resistance to imperialism on the part of the indigenous peoples of Peru, the *indigenismo* movement, and Bilingual Education Programs are responsible for continued use of Quechua, Aymara, and other indigenous languages. However, the indigenous languages of Peru now face new threats with processes of globalization and the rise of English as a global language.

**Keywords:** Peru, language, Quechua, imperialism and resistance

### Introduction

The architecture of Cusco today is mainly Inca foundations with Spanish constructions on top. During the conquest and establishment of colonial rule, the Spanish often dismantled Inca constructions and used the materials for their own constructions. Modern descendants of the Incas take great pride in the fact that, after major earthquakes, the Spanish constructions often need to be reconstructed, while the Inca foundations remain intact (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, pp. 315-316). This can be seen as an analogy of the imposition of Spanish language, culture, and political and social institutions on the Inca society, while the indigenous culture and language survive as part of the foundation of the modern culture.

Many indigenous languages became extinct as a result of Spanish conquest and colonialism, and other languages continue to be lost due to the wider use of the Spanish language. Now English, through processes of globalization, is playing an important role in the displacement of indigenous languages in Peru. One of these languages, Quechua, is an official language and it is still spoken by close to half of the population; nevertheless, it can be considered an endangered language because of its marginalized status (Hornberger, 1998, p. 439; Hornberger & King, 2001, pp. 166-168; McCarty, 2008, pp. 137-138, 145; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2008, p. 3). The languages spoken by much smaller numbers of people are in even more precarious situations. However, there is still some room for hope that some of the indigenous languages, along with the knowledge embedded in those languages, can be preserved for future generations.

The analysis presented here is based in part on Phillipson's ideas about linguistic imperialism, where the dominance of a language "is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between a dominant language and other languages" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47). This concept will be applied first to the Spanish language, and then to English, in terms of structural inequalities and linguistic policies in Peru. As Lopez (2008) argues, "[i]ndigenous monolingualism, bi and multilingualism as well as the accelerated processes of language decay and loss experienced in the region are a direct result of... the history of linguistic domination and oppression under which the indigenous languages function in the prevailing colonial organization of Latin American societies" (p. 141).

To understand the current status of indigenous languages in Peru, one must understand the country's history of multiculturalism and multilingualism, as well as the establishment and reconstruction of structures of cultural and linguistic inequality. For that reason, language use, maintenance, and loss are presented here within an historical framework, beginning with an overview of the cultural and linguistic reality of the pre-colonial Americas. Several important historical events and their impacts on language use in Peru are colonization, independence, *indigenismo* and Velasco's presidency, implementation of bilingual education programs, and the rise in importance of English under current processes of globalization. Each of these historical periods will be examined using an approach adapted from Pennycook, who argues that language "is bound up in a wealth of local social, cultural, economic and political complexities" (1994, p. 7). Pennycook's ideas also are included in a discussion of important aspects of human agency and resistance within each period. Finally, there is a consideration of future possibilities for maintenance of indigenous languages in Peru.

### **Pre-colonial Heritage**

Before Peru existed as a country, the area that came to be known as the Americas was made up of a diversity of ethno-cultural groups, including small, isolated groups; larger urban

centres; and huge empires (Wright, 1992, p. 6). There is evidence in the South American Andes and Pacific Coast of numerous great civilizations, dating back as far as 5000 BC, including the Chavin, Mochica, Nazca, Chimu, Huari, and Tiahuanaco civilizations. The Inca Empire incorporated elements of all previous cultures in the area, attaining a population of twelve million people in the fifteenth century (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, pp. 39-40). Communication in the empire was facilitated through elaborate road systems, *chaskis* (messengers), and *quipus* (a system of colour-coded strings with knots used by the Incas for record keeping) (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, pp. 40-44).

Despite widespread assimilation into the Inca Empire, as many as 1,200 indigenous languages may still have been in existence in the Americas by the sixteenth century (Von Gleich, 1997, p. 10). Many of the languages spoken by these ancient civilizations used non-alphabetical systems, and hence there is the tendency to call them illiterate. However, that terminology doesn't acknowledge the different literacies of these civilizations, such as textile writing, ceramic representation, or *quipus* to record information (Sichra, 2008, p. 283). The Inca Huayna Capac promoted the use of a unifying *lingua franca* through a policy of "Quechuification," while at the same time fostering plurilingualism, by allowing the maintenance of the multitude of other languages in their territory (Mar-Moliner, 2000, p. 58). The continuing linguistic diversity was partly a result of the Inca policies, and partly of the geography of the area, with its variety of ecological niches in relatively dispersed and isolated areas (Sichra, 2000, p. 284). Quechua evolved into many different varieties in the various regions it was used (Pozzi-Escott, 1998, pp. 216-303).

### **Colonialism and Independence**

In search of honour and glory, riches and lands for the Spanish crown, Spanish ships arrived in what is now known as Latin America in the late fifteenth century. The devastating and long-lasting social and cultural impacts on the people they "discovered" in America are well-known. As much as one-half the indigenous population was killed by diseases that arrived with the Spanish (smallpox, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, yellow fever, cholera, malaria) (Wright, 1992, p. 13). The Inca leader Huayna Capac, his oldest son and heir to the throne, many political advisors, soldiers, and priests succumbed to illness, leaving the empire weakened and facilitating the overthrow of the empire (Wright, 1992, p. 73). Large numbers of the indigenous population were also killed by Spanish military forces. For example, in 1532, 5,000 to 10,000 unarmed soldiers were killed when the Inca Atahualpa agreed to meet the Spanish invaders in the central square of Cajamarca (Wright, 1992, p. 80). By 1600, less than 10% of the original population remained (Wright, 1992, p. 13).

Numerous political, economic and social institutions of domination were implemented in the period of colonization. In a similar fashion to the imposition of Spanish architecture on Inca foundations, the Inca systems of tribute and hierarchical relations merged with new forms

of rule. Many indigenous people lost their lands, their livelihoods, and even their lives under the unjust conditions of the *encomienda* and the *mita* (the name given to forced labour, particularly in the gold and silver mines (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, pp. 72-73). The brutality of colonization led to the loss of large quantities of historical information and cultural artefacts. *Quipus* were burned despite recognition of the importance of the information they expressed (Wright, 1992, p. 68), and artistic and religious expressions were stolen for the precious metals they contained (Wright, 1992, p. 82). During the colonial period, hierarchical structures based on skin colour were established (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, p. 75). The Europeans, or “whites,” had political power, social status, prestige, and control of economic activity, and the other racial/ethnic groups were generally categorized according to their degree of “whiteness,” with blacks at the bottom of the hierarchy (Stein & Stein, 1970, p. 57). As discrimination based on race and ethnic identity also extended to language, many speakers of indigenous languages chose not to speak their languages in public or teach them to their children. Adopting the language and customs of the “whites” was seen to provide more opportunities for advancement, because the social categories weren’t entirely based on genetics, but rather could change depending on the way people lived, looked, dressed, and spoke (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, p. 75).

In initial stages of colonialism, there was acceptance of indigenous languages such as Quechua, Aymara, and Puquina, as the means for evangelization and colonial administration (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 316; Hornberger & King, 2001, p. 166). In the sixteenth century, some religious texts were printed in Quechua using the Spanish alphabet. Professorships were created at San Marcos University in 1579, and provided further impetus for Quechua writing and texts (Sichra, 2008, p. 285). In the seventeenth century, the Jesuits formed schools for the children of local rulers (*caciques*) to teach them Spanish language and culture, so that they might serve as intermediaries (Sichra, 2008, p. 285). While some Spanish chroniclers were hired to discredit the Incas and produce a Spanish version of colonial history, some Inca descendants also wrote in Quechua to refute those versions of history (Wright, 1992, p. 190). At this time, many valuable Quechua texts were produced, including grammatical descriptions and historical accounts. Important among these are the works of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, and Cristobal de Molina (Sichra, 2008, p. 286). The widespread use and social validity of written Quechua are also evident in the records of judicial complaints and petitions written in Quechua by elites between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and Quechua language theatrical and literary works in Spanish styles (Sichra, 2008, p. 287).

Despite the processes of writing and using Quechua, and to a lesser extent, Aymara and other indigenous languages for Christianization and administration, there was a gradual move from multilingualism to Spanish dominance. *Mestizos* and children of the indigenous elites came to use Spanish as a primary means of communication (Mar-Molinero, 2000, p. 29). Use of Spanish in administration, trading, and legal transactions meant that Spanish became the most

prestigious and widely used language. Beginning with Charles III's reforms in 1770, a policy of "Castilianization" was established. The aim was to achieve, permanently, the extinction of subordinate languages, which would mean that only Spanish would be spoken (Sichra, 2008, p. 285). Rebellious indigenous people were killed, Incas were stripped of all traditional titles, and use of their languages and cultural symbols was banned (Wright, 1992, p. 199). This led to the extinction of various indigenous languages on the Peruvian coast and northern sierra, and the social and political marginalization of Quechua and Aymara. Jesuits were still committed to using indigenous languages, and so they were expelled from Peru in 1767 to remove opposition to the policy of unilingualism (Mar-Molinero, 2000, p. 30).

Illustrations made by Guaman Poma de Ayala in the early seventeenth century show the torture, murder, rape, extortion, corruption, and wanton destruction of public works in the encounter between indigenous people and their colonizers (Wright, 1992, p. 191). With the population decimated, supplies gone, bridges burned, and cultural symbols destroyed, this could have been the end of the indigenous culture. However, covert resistance, encouraged by Huayna Capac before his death, means that significant elements of history, culture, spirituality, and indigenous languages were maintained under the guise of obedience and subordination (Wright, 1992, p. 187). Indigenous peoples continued to practice their religions, and share stories, songs, and theatre in indigenous languages.

Widespread resistance to the inhumane conditions of colonial rule fuelled Inca uprisings, including those led by the Inca Yupanqui in 1533 (Wright, 1992, p. 178), Tupac Amaru in 1572, and Tupac Amaru II in 1780 (Chang-Rodriguez, 2000, p. 121). In all cases, the uprisings ended in the face of Spanish military might and the brutal deaths of the Inca leaders and thousands of supporters. The battles in the eighteenth century can be seen both as a reaction to the difficult economic conditions under which the indigenous people lived and as an early manifestation of the independence movement.

The majority of independence leaders were creoles who, rather than hoping to overturn the colonial economic system, were hoping to make it work to their advantage. The indigenous peoples were forced to fight for either the independence movement or the Spanish crown, but independence brought little change for the indigenous *mestizo* and black people (Stein & Stein, 1970, pp. 132-133). From the time of independence in 1821, there was a succession of military governments supporting their own power and the interests of the oligarchy, or specific groups within the oligarchy, with little participation of or influence on the situation of indigenous people. The use of large estates and indigenous labour for export production continued and preserved status from generation to generation (Stein & Stein, 1970, p. 137).

### ***Indigenismo* and Velasco**

In the early twentieth century, *indigenismo* brought the interests of *mestizos*, whites, and indigenous people together in a limited way as a political and cultural force. There was an

increase in awareness of the injustice faced by indigenous populations in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America. There was a revival of writing on indigenous themes by non-indigenous writers, and of indigenous music and art forms (Wright, 1992, pp. 277-288). *Indigenismo* influenced the formation of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), a political party that still exists (Wright, 1992, p. 277). Pro-indigenous sentiments led to the 1968 military coup brought Juan Velasco Alvarado to power, and he initiated dramatic reforms to redistribute power and wealth in Peru (Wright, 1992, p. 286).

Velasco used indigenous symbols and heroes, such as Tupac Amaru II, to represent his leadership. Under his leadership, Quechua not only became an official language, but it was also to be taught at all levels of the education system, and knowledge of Quechua was to be required for graduation from university. He also tried to improve the economic situation of indigenous peoples through agrarian reform, nationalization of mining and oil industries, and recreation of the Inca trade routes (Wright, 1992, p. 286). However, Velasco was unable to undo centuries of destruction and denigration of the indigenous culture he sought to restore, and his reforms faced widespread resistance among the elite. In 1975 he was removed from office, and many of his reforms were reversed, including some related to the wider use of Quechua (Wright, 1992, p. 287).

Velasco's focus on indigenous languages included attempts to standardize the Quechua alphabet and writing system, using three vowels instead of the five borrowed from Spanish. This change unleashed the "war of the vowels," with members of the Cusco-based Academy of the Quechua Language fighting the change (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 316). This battle continues to this day, despite the fact that the revised three-vowel system was a result of consultation, and it acquired official status in 1985 (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 316). It can be argued that the intense debates about standardization take precious energy and resources away from much more important language revitalization efforts, and these debates remain largely out of the hands of indigenous peoples themselves (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 316; Hornberger & King, 2001, p. 177; McCarty, 2008, p. 145; Sichra, 2008, p. 292).

Velasco's government was successful in creating dialogue around the possibility of structural reforms to improve the social and economic conditions of indigenous people, and may have been partly responsible for the formation of revolutionary groups in the following decade. *Sendero Luminoso* and *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* claimed to represent the interests of indigenous peoples from a socialist perspective, and both sought to overturn the government, without success (Wright, 1992, p. 287). Throughout the 1980s, the Peruvian countryside was the site of extreme violence between the national military and the revolutionary groups, the deaths of 200,000 to 40,000 indigenous people (Wright, 1992, p. 290), and conditions that made working the land or going to school nearly impossible. People were afraid to let their sympathies show. Rosa Medina (personal communication, July 15, 1998)

recalls how she would wake up regularly to find bodies on the streets of Ayacucho, not knowing whether they had been killed by *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) or the military.

The violence of the 1980s caused large-scale migration from the affected areas to Lima. The displacement created further economic difficulties for the indigenous people, and led to the establishment of *pueblos jóvenes*, which offered little in the way of employment or services such as water, education, or health care for the now landless, poor, and unemployed indigenous people. Marginalization, isolation, and limited educational opportunities led to further erosion of indigenous culture and languages. However, migration of indigenous peoples to urban areas such as Lima also led to Spanish being “strongly marked by Quechua and Aymara linguistic features... [so that] even if Spanish has subjugated the Andean indigenous languages, these languages are transforming Spanish” (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 316).

### **Quechua Language in Education**

Velasco’s attempts to implement bilingual education failed to undo the effects of colonial and post-colonial education strategies. The curtailment of primary education for indigenous peoples served as an effective means for maintaining the rigid social stratification during colonial rule and after independence (Stein & Stein, 1970, p. 176). Numerous attempts by Indigenous Peoples to claim rights to land, language, and education, including Velasco’s efforts, failed to change their situation. The education system continues to be a major site of struggle for indigenous rights, reflecting both successes and continued challenges. Schools in rural areas can be understood as vehicles for assimilation or as a continued source of devaluation of indigenous languages and culture, where teaching methodologies and print materials often ignore indigenous learning styles, culture, traditional knowledge, and lived experiences.

After Chinese and English, Spanish is now the third most widely spoken world language, and it remains an important language in Peru and in the Americas. Parents’ views that education in a dominant language is “a viable strategy to counteract linguistic oppression and marginalization” (Lopez, 2008, p. 146) has led to greater levels of bilingualism or Spanish monolingualism among indigenous peoples. However, mastery of the dominant language has not provided indigenous peoples with equal status and access to power and wealth within the country.

In a few isolated cases, schools using indigenous languages were established in the early twentieth century. In 1945 the first official indigenous education program in Peru was established, but its existence was short lived due to funding cuts (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 317). In the 1980s and 1990s, several experimental bilingual education projects emerged, often with funded by international cooperation agencies rather than through governmental support (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 317; Hornberger, 1998, pp. 444-445; Hornberger & King, 2001, p. 177). Bilingual Intercultural Education (EBI, also known as IBE) programs are increasingly common in

rural areas. In 2004, they reached 127,000 indigenous children, trained 6,300 bilingual teachers, and prepared textbooks in several indigenous languages, as well as a handbook for teaching Spanish as a Second Language (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 322). Bilingual Intercultural Education has led to increased parent involvement, enrolment, attendance, and retention, and less grade repetition; students in these programs also report higher levels of self-esteem (Lopez & Sichra, 2008, p. 300).

There has been success in the area of teacher training for EBI programs, some provided through foreign funding and others through the Ministry of Education. There are programs training indigenous teachers in 15 different Amazonian languages (Lopez, 2008, p. 143). In addition to its EBI programs for children in rural areas near Cusco, the Asociacion Pukllasunchis provides EBI training for teachers who work in public and private bilingual schools, the majority of them indigenous people. The program is offered in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (Asociacion Pukllasunchis).

Despite the relative success of EBI programs in Peru, many of these programs are often lacking in indigenous participation in planning and curriculum development and generally fail to incorporate effectively indigenous world views, knowledge systems, and ways of knowing. They also have generally focused on literacy skills, which allow greater assimilation into mainstream education at higher levels, and ignore the importance of orality in indigenous cultures and the important links between language and culture (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 325; Lopez & Sichra, 2008, p. 296; Sichra, 2008, p. 292). Furthermore, almost all bilingual intercultural education is aimed at rural indigenous populations, so that the “burden of bilingualism continues to fall uniformly on indigenous shoulders” (Hornberger & King, 2001, p. 181), while non-indigenous people rarely learn Quechua or other indigenous languages (Lopez & Sichra, 2008, p. 299). However, increased participation and political influence from indigenous organizations are having a positive, transformative effect on these programs (Lopez & Sichra, 2008, p. 296; Sichra, 2008, p. 290).

The Colegio Pukllasunchis provides a model that attempts to promote Quechua language and culture to a wider audience. Their alternative school project in Cusco offers a sliding scale of payment to encourage participation of people from a variety of economic and ethnic groups, including poor indigenous students, *mestizos*, and national and international whites. Spanish is the language of instruction, but Quechua is given primacy over English as a second language. Quechua instruction begins in kindergarten, while English as a second language instruction is not introduced until grade 4 (Cristina Appenzeller, personal communication, March 10, 1997).

Quechua is also available as a subject in institutions of higher education around the world, and internet pages and software have been developed in Quechua. Such is the extent of the international recognition of Quechua that Hornberger and King argue “it is more likely that



Quechua speakers, given the proper technology, could communicate with foreigners from around the globe than with the majority of their own countrymen” (2001, p. 183).

### **The Rise of English**

Through processes of globalization, English has come to be considered the most important language in the world, as measured by numbers of speakers and spheres of influence. It is linked to the spread of capitalism and development aid, as well as the dominating influence of North American media (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992). In Peru, English seems to be taking over from Spanish, operating as a language of prestige and power. English therefore has become a kind of gatekeeper to progress, both social and economic, and to the international flow of people.<sup>1</sup>

While EBI is being pursued in rural indigenous communities, students in urban areas are increasingly being exposed to English in the public and private school systems. The different forms of bilingualism acquired through these two systems maintain social, political, and economic inequality. A review of the Ministry of Education website (Ministerio de Educacion Peru) and its curriculum areas shows the category “Foreign languages (English, or native language).” Of course, the classification of native languages as a foreign language is in itself a contradiction. In addition, the “or” assumes students will receive education in either English or a native language. In almost all urban schools in Lima, and even in Cusco where a large indigenous population lives, the choice is English. Many parents also try to give their children an advantage with additional English language skills, as is evident by the increasing number of English language classes offered outside regular school hours.

A large proportion of upper- and middle-class Peruvians attend private schools of varying degrees of prestige and associated costs. There they learn English as a second language, or in several elite Lima schools, as the language of instruction. The costs of the English language schools make them prohibitive for most. One American school’s website listed a registration fee of \$6,800, with annual tuition fees of \$11,550 (Franklin D. Roosevelt). In a country where, in 2004, approximately half the population lived on less than two dollars a day and 15 percent lived on less than one dollar a day (World Bank), this type of education is not affordable for the majority of Peruvians. Attendance at these schools can provide prestige, future educational opportunities outside the country, and economic opportunities in an era of globalization. Many Peruvian doctors are educated outside the country. Although Alejandro Toledo has indigenous roots and came from a poor family, support from an international organization allowed him to obtain a university education in economics in the United States. That education and English language skills gave him political influence and served him well in the 2000 elections, when he was able to use international contacts and media to draw international attention to the electoral fraud by Alberto Fujimori. With popular support from indigenous people, as well as

elite support based on his foreign training and contacts, Toledo was president of Peru from 2001 to 2006 (Alejandro Toledo).

Economic factors are certainly a driving force in the increasing acquisition of English language skills. Knowledge of English has become very important for the booming tourist industry. More than 1,800,000 people visited Peru in 2007; and almost 400,000 came from North America, and a similar number came from Europe (Peru Ministry of Foreign Commerce). This means that a great number of the visitors speak English as a first or second language. There are growing numbers of post-secondary institutions and academies devoted to preparing a local workforce for the tourist industry, all of which include English language training. The majority of the hotels, hostels, restaurants, travel agencies, nightclubs, and internet cafes in the Cusco region employ people with English language skills. A branch of the Cusco police force is in charge of helping tourists, mainly with complaints about robberies.

In the face of economic and cultural globalization, English is still perceived to be the language of greatest possible benefit. However, as English language skills become more common, other languages may increase in value. For example, there appears to be an increasing demand for tour guides who speak Japanese. Even so, the importance of English for trade and commerce will likely grow in light of the recently signed Free Trade Agreement with the United States. This same agreement may also lead to a further erosion of indigenous culture, languages, and rights, as Peruvian policies are made to align with market forces and international trade rules. Numerous NGOs work in development and conservation initiatives in Peru, with their support coming from a variety of countries in the developed world. These organizations have brought many English-speaking directors, staff, and volunteers to Peru. Knowledge of English is often required to write proposals and reports for the funding agencies.

Another interesting phenomenon in Cusco is the group of young people known as *bricheros*. These young people, usually women, learn English in an attempt to meet foreign visitors, mainly in nightclubs or tourist attractions, with the hope of finding a spouse who will take them out of the country. One young woman, who grew up speaking Quechua and Spanish, learned both English and German to increase her chances of finding a foreign husband, and maintained written contact with several potential mates over a period of a couple of years, before finally marrying and moving to Germany. The mere existence of such a group is a sign that many young people see learning a foreign language and leaving the country as the best route to a prosperous future, and access a better life as seen on television.

### **The Future Survival of Indigenous Languages**

Peru is a megadiverse country with a wide variety of ecological zones, species, and culture, and much of this knowledge is encoded in indigenous languages. Thus, the loss of indigenous language and culture is also the loss of knowledge for adaptation to changing conditions and for the survival of the planet. As Baker (as cited in Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson,

2008) argues, “In the language of ecology, the strongest ecosystems are those that are the most diverse. Diversity is directly related to stability; variety is important for long-term survival” (p. 2). Baker adds that “[o]ur success on this planet has been due to an ability to adapt to different kinds of environment over thousands of years. Such an ability is born out of diversity. Thus language and cultural diversity maximises chances of human success and adaptability” (p. 2).

The Incas seem to have known this, and rather than assimilate other cultures they adopted and adapted elements of various cultures and encouraged diversity. Unfortunately, diversity in the world is being threatened by what Vandana Shiva calls “monocultures of the mind.” She argues that globalization “renders local knowledge invisible by declaring it non-existent or illegitimate” and generates “models of production which destroy diversity and legitimize that destruction as progress” (2008, introduction).

Despite centuries of linguistic imperialism, current estimates show that 37% of Peruvians belong to indigenous communities speaking 40 different languages (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 315) and there are 10 to 12 million speakers of Quechua in the Andean region (Hornberger, 1998, p. 445; McCarty, 2008, p. 137; Sichra, 2008, p. 288; Wright, 1992, p. 4). Quechua names of places, streets, and stores; Inca architecture as tourist attractions; and the survival of Inca culture and language reflect the pride of indigenous peoples, and of many of the European descendants. Indigenous cultural symbols such as Machu Picchu, Inca weavings, and Mochica ceramics are all claimed as part of the national heritage, and are exploited for their economic value in the tourist industry.

The present situation of indigenous peoples and their languages reflects legal protection, but in the context of implicit assimilationist policies, maintenance of inequality, and social exclusion (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 327). International agreements and national policy changes in recent decades provide some protection for indigenous peoples’ rights to culture and language. For example, in the 1990s, the Peruvian constitution was modified to recognize and incorporate ethnic and cultural diversity, and ensure rights to education in indigenous languages (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 323; Lopez, 2008, p. 143). In 2006, two Quechua women from rural Cusco, Hilaria Supa and Maria Sumire, were elected to the Peruvian Congress (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 322). Despite legal protection, indigenous people make up the majority of the poor in Peru, and continue to be marginalized politically and economically. A well-known writer and former presidential candidate, Vargas Llosa, claimed not to like the Incas very much, and stated that progress in Peru required the assimilation of primitive indigenous people (Wright, 1992, p. 7); he had hoped to deny the right the vote to illiterate people, which would have excluded large numbers of indigenous people from political participation (Wright, 1992, p. 291). When Hilaria Supa and Maria Sumire chose to speak in Quechua in Congress, translators had to be hired, irritating most members of the Congress (Godenzzi, 2008, p. 323). Despite their political success, the women still face regular discrimination. Two were denied entrance to their flight

with a major airline for no apparent reason other than their appearance (“Las Congresistas,” 2006) and Juana Huancahuari, another member of Congress, claimed that military guards outside the parliament made derogatory comments about her and visiting constituents (“Denuncian,” 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Coronel-Molina notes that it has taken many centuries to devalue indigenous languages, and it may take many centuries to revalorize them (as cited in Hornberger & King, 2001, p. 167). However, indigenous peoples have shown their resilience in the face of incredible oppression and exploitation. Throughout these centuries of domination, they have managed to maintain important elements of their culture, keep their languages alive, and bring them into the modern world. Nonetheless, all indigenous languages are at risk and require appropriate language policies and language education to ensure their survival.

Recognizing the importance of Quechua and other indigenous languages as part of the foundation of indigenous knowledge and culture, as well as the key to preserving the biological diversity upon which our survival depends, is only the beginning of any effective preservation and revival efforts. Survival of indigenous languages is possible only if indigenous peoples are given a degree of autonomy to use and promote their languages, and can identify their own priorities, strategies, and methodologies. Otherwise, Quechua and other indigenous languages that have managed to survive hundreds of years of linguistic imperialism risk the fate of thousands of other languages—extinction. Preservation and revival do not mean “bringing languages BACK,” but rather requires that efforts be made to “bring them FORWARD” (Hornberger & King, as cited in Hornberger, 1998, p. 453). For example, indigenous languages can benefit from new communication technologies and international networks. However, effective language and education policies must also foster grassroots, bottom-up approaches where language is transmitted within families, communities, and schools. In addition, such policies must recognize alternative literacies and ways of knowing while supporting the rights of indigenous peoples.

## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Much of the description of the use of English that follows is the result of experience as an English teacher in the Universidad Nacional San Antonio Abad de Cusco, as a parent of children attending elementary and secondary school in Cusco, as an employee of an indigenous NGO working in rural communities near Cusco, as well as information acquired from numerous friends and relatives in Cusco, Lima and Ayacucho between 1995 and 2008.

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