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## Redemption Radio: Aymara Language Planning at Radio San Gabriel

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This paper examines the links between language use, speakers and institutional authority in the enforcement of a “language purity” policy in programming at Radio San Gabriel (RSG), the oldest Aymara language radio station in Bolivia. RSG self-identifies as an Aymara cultural epicenter and situates language use as central to this project. RSG’s Aymara language department develops and approves scripts and monitors programming. The acts of identifying Spanish loan word “aberrations” and replacing them with Aymara neologisms or archaicisms provide a central focus for this department, but so too does their program intended for bilingual teachers – *Aymara Language*. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork at RSG and on linguistic and discourse analysis of a broadcast of the program *Aymara Language*, this study responds to calls for ethnographic work describing “bottom-up” descriptions of language planning and Indigenous language revitalization.

## Introduction

**N**ational Geographic has recently brought the issue of language endangerment into public discussion with the launching of their “Enduring Voices” project that aims to draw attention to the issues of language loss and the work of linguists documenting these languages (Harrison, 2007). Couching language loss in geographic terms, a map is featured prominently on their website<sup>1</sup>. The map displays “hotspots” of language endangerment across the globe with bright colors covering Siberia, the central Andes, northern Australia, Oklahoma and the southwest U.S., marking the sites most at risk of language loss. While there is no denying that these are “at-risk” areas in terms of language loss, another way to look at these “hotspots” would be as areas of linguistic resilience. In these territories, Indigenous peoples have managed to maintain their languages and life ways in the face of long-term histories of colonial domination and subjugation. This paper explores the issue of linguistic resilience in the face of language loss in one of these “hotspots” – the central Andes – as taken up within the language planning and policies (LPP) of an Aymara language radio station in the Bolivian city of El Alto. I examine this radio station’s LPP project in terms of sets of language ideological practices coupling linguistic form with other frames of meaning – historical, economic and ethnopolitical.

El Alto is Bolivia’s fastest growing city, populated primarily by migrants from the surrounding high plain region, making it home to the largest population of ethnically Aymara Bolivians (Albó, 2006; Arbona, 2005). In the Andes, as elsewhere

in Latin America, Indigenous peoples' migration from rural communities to urban centers has often come with a corresponding shift to Spanish dominance and the abandonment of their Indigenous languages (Howard, 2007). This is a general trend, however, and hardly a rule, El Alto being a possible exception. In the last Bolivian census, 82% of the city's population self-identified as Indigenous (Arbona, 2005; Instituto Nacional de Estadística [INE], 2001). Aymara can be heard in any market in El Alto, in conversations on public transit, and as will be discussed here, in the mass media. Additionally, the city is home to Aymara cultural institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that operate as epicenters of language maintenance. By studying LPP within the context of one such institution – Radio San Gabriel (RSG) –this paper aims to provide insight into “bottom up”, local experiences in Indigenous language maintenance and revitalization, exploring the possibilities for radio to engage in unofficial LPP.

This paper draws from research conducted in 2007 while I was collaborating with two Indigenous bilingual education teacher-training programs in Bolivia. During that year I became conscious of the prominent role that radio played in people's lives, and learned something of the historic role that radio had played, both for highland communities and miners in Bolivia (Albó, 1974; O'Connor, 2006). Responding to my curiosity about Indigenous language use within this realm of cultural production, I surveyed the radiophonic landscape and the literature on Bolivian radio, inquired among Aymara colleagues and acquaintances and concluded that RSG was an important referent among Aymara language radio stations. I approached RSG's administration and procured permission to interview them, their programmers, and announcers. The interviews were conducted mostly in Spanish as an accommodation to my limited Aymara proficiency. Transcripts of the RSG's program *Lengua Aymara* were developed in consultation with a private Aymara tutor and an RSG radio announcer.

Following a discussion of the state of Aymara and Indigenous languages in Bolivia, in this paper I explore the LPP dynamics of status, acquisition and corpus planning operating within and emanating from RSG. The approach taken here draws on a multimethodological critical discourse analytic approach (Wodak, 2006) including interviews, analysis of institutional speech chains (Agha, 2007) at RSG and discourse analysis of broadcast speech within the opening of a morning program.



Picture 1. Radio San Gabriel - El Alto, Bolivia.

### **Aymara and Indigenous Languages in Bolivia**

Bolivia, along with Guatemala, is one of the countries in the Americas with a majority Indigenous population (López & Sichra, 2008). This is not because Bolivia somehow escaped the ravages of European colonialism. Hardly isolated from the world economy, Bolivia has found itself at the crux of global financial markets since the 16th century when gold mined from Potosí left the Andes for Europe. It so happens that the gold of “the Golden Age” was mined by the conscripted labor of millions of Indigenous colonial subjects who perished in Andean mines under the Spanish colonial regime. Bolivia’s relationship to the world economy of providing primary resources did not end with colonialism, but continued through the twentieth century with Bolivian tin making its way to factories from Detroit to Dresden, and continues today with Bolivia’s contribution of natural gas to the world market.

During the initial years of European invasion, millions died from diseases like influenza and smallpox throughout the Americas and this period saw many ethnolinguistic populations completely wiped out, leaving behind no speakers of their languages. The trauma of conquest and genocide, we will see below, resonates in contemporary discourses of language purism where language is used as a proxy for racialized ethnic identities. In the 16th century Quechua and Aymara were in wide use in the central Andes, with Quechua functioning as a “language of wider of communication” in the Andes. A Jesuit Priest, José de Acosta, writing in

1591, describes the panorama of linguistic diversity in the city and province of La Paz as follows: “*Todos los indios de esta provincia y ciudad hablan la lengua general que se llama aymara, aunque también muchos de ellos hablan y entienden la lengua quechua, que es la lengua general del Inga.*” [All the Indians of this province and city speak the general language which is called Aymara, although many of them also speak and understand the Quechua language, which is the general language of the Inca] (as cited in Torero, 1975, p. 225, translation mine).

Contrary to popular belief, the Spanish colonial regime did not uniformly aim to wipe out Indigenous languages. Throughout the colonial period, Indigenous languages were used periodically by the colonial religious apparatus, taught and studied at the prestigious Universidad de San Marcos, and were even used for literary and theatrical production (Itier, 1995; Sichra, 2008).

Quechua and Aymara survive today with millions of speakers. The Summer Institute of Linguistics’ Ethnologue reports approximately two and a half million speakers of Aymara in Bolivia, Chile and Peru. Puquina, another Andean language at the time of conquest, has no speakers today and the small communities of Uru and Chipayas on islands in Lake Titicaca and along the shores of Lake Poopó face a critical situation with regards to intergenerational language loss.

Like the Uru-Chipaya, most of Bolivia’s 35 indigenous languages face varying degrees of threat in the face of Spanish language hegemony (López, 2007). Compared to Uru-Chipaya and the many Amazonian languages, Quechua and Aymara stand out as comparatively vibrant languages. It remains a reasonable question whether or not they should be considered endangered languages. Despite Aymara and Quechua’s larger number of speakers, these languages are spoken within a context of diglossia tending towards language shift (Fishman, 1968). Spanish is consistently privileged over Indigenous languages, and speakers of Spanish spoken with traces of Indigenous phonology are subject to denigrating stereotypes in the national media and elsewhere (Swinehart, 2008).

While demographic density can impact language survival, even a large population of speakers may not prevent an intergenerational break in the social transmission of a language (Barreña, Amorrortu, Ortega, Uranga, Izagirre, & Idiazabal, 2007). Joshua Fishman (1991) developed the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) as a heuristic to assess the threat of language loss/ extinction facing a community. Aymara could be placed higher (at greater) or lower risk on the GIDS scale depending on which factors one highlights in an assessment. An optimistic assessment could recognize Aymara’s official status, longstanding intercultural bilingual education (IBE) programs and presence in higher education in Normal schools in Aymara areas (Luykx, 1999) and in programs like the Program for the Formation of Intercultural Bilingual Education for Andean Countries (Hornberger & Hult, 2008). These are particular instances, however, rather than generalized conditions across social domains. Beyond the realm of teachers colleges and rural primary schools, it is difficult to find examples of Aymara being used as a medium of instruction. In higher education contexts, its study is largely limited to linguistics courses as an object of study, although increasingly professional schools in medicine and social work offer Aymara or Quechua as second language courses<sup>2</sup>. At the primary level, IBE is restricted to designated rural schools and does not extend beyond early primary instruction, resulting in a situation where only a minority of Aymara children receive any schooling in the Aymara language.



Although a full assessment of Aymara's placement along the GIDS scale lies beyond the scope of this discussion, Aymara's placement within GIDS can be described by Stage 6 on Fishman's (1991) scale as, "the attainment of intergenerational informality and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement" (p. 92). While Aymara generally occupies a disadvantageous position *vis-à-vis* Spanish in Bolivian society, there are pockets of language use and development where Aymara constitutes a permanent feature of the local linguistic ecology. One motivation for this study is to examine RSG as one such site of *institutional reinforcement* of Aymara language use.

### *Aymara LPP - Idioms and Discourses of Aymara Purism*

Prior to Spanish invasion there was no written orthography but instead, diverse textile semiotic systems, such as the *kipu* (Salomon, 2004; Sichra, 2008). For Aymara and other Indigenous languages, the written word came with colonialism. Dictionaries and grammars of Aymara, Guaraní, Quechua, Nahuatl and other languages were produced by sixteenth century Jesuit scholars for the purposes of evangelization and colonial administration. The Aymara language's history of corpus planning predates most modern European languages. The Jesuit Ludovico Bertonio's 1612 Aymara dictionary remains a reference today. Antonio de Nebrija's dictionary and grammar of Spanish, the first of any Romance language besides Latin, was published only a little more than a century earlier in 1492. Bertonio's Aymara dictionary comes more than a century before Samuel Johnson's 1755 English dictionary, and decades before L'Academie Française's publication of its first dictionary in 1694.

In the twentieth century, Aymara language corpus planning has been a contentious arena. The debates and conflicts are parallel in many ways to those that have unfolded in the process of Quechua language reforms. Hornberger (1995) discusses the debates leading up to the decision of the 1983 First Workshop on Quechua and Aymara Writing and the respective ideological and institutional investments of the players there. The workshop addressed the standardization of writing systems for both Quechua and Aymara. Despite the similar phonemic inventories<sup>3</sup>, Aymara phonology differs from Quechua most notably in vowel elision. The Aymara orthography of the Bolivian 1994 Education Reform does not include vowel elision, keeping all morphemes "intact." The result is that, if read aloud syllable by syllable, the Aymara of the 1994 reform diverges radically from spoken Aymara. The motivation behind this seems to be twofold. Firstly, this was a result of pedagogy rooted in a grammatical/linguistic approach aiming to teach discrete morphemic units. Secondly, this may have come from a notion that vowel elision is a result of contact with or even *contamination from* Spanish.

The Bolivian linguist Félix Layme Pairumani (2002), a key advisor in the Aymara orthographic norm for the 1994 reform, writes in a grammar for bilingual teachers, "*Cuando hablamos, es decir, en la oralidad, por influencia del castellano a veces no pronunciamos las vocales.*" [When we speak, that is to say, in orality, because of the influence from Castilian sometimes we do not pronounce the vowels] (Layme Pairumani, 2002, p. 121, emphasis and translation mine). Vowel elision in Aymara is, in fact, syntactically motivated, affecting the final vowel of any major constituent of a sentence not occupying the final position in the sentence (Adelaar, 2004).

Not only does this position view Aymara vowel elision as a flaw within speech (an issue of “not pronouncing”), but also a flaw resulting from Spanish language contact and, by extension, the legacy of colonialism. Layme casts the orthographic inclusion of “unpronounced” vowels within an Aymara nationalist light, resting on the illegitimacy of Spanish imposition on Aymara speech. This is a move that resonates with a central feature of Aymara language purism – the purging of Spanish loan words.

Aymara language purism is selective in its attention to which loan words are purged from the corpus. Aymara has been in centuries of contact with not only Spanish, but also Quechua. If language planners were to attempt a purge of Quechua loan words there would be at least two problems, the first being the large percentage of the southern Quechua and Aymara lexicon that is shared, and the second would be determining the directionality of the loans (Cerrón-Palomino, 1994). Words as common as door (*punku*), wall (*pirqa*), and the numbers three (*kim-sa*), five (*phisqa*), six (*suxta*), and ten (*tunka*) almost surely came into the Aymara lexicon from contact with Quechua. Reciprocally, there is a compelling theory that the ejective consonants of southern Quechua emerged as an areal feature from contact with Aymara (Adelaar, 2004).

This selective purging is not unique or surprising; it simply underscores the sociohistorical situatedness of such purist efforts. Neustupny (1989) provides Czech purism as another example of selective purging of loan words where German loans were subject to replacement but not French or Latin loans. In post-Soviet Tatarstan, an area in the Volga region inhabited by a Muslim and Turkic minority group, Tartar language purism purges Russian loans but embraces the re-adoption of Arabic and Persian loans (Wertheim, 2002). Despite the historical fact of Aymara subjugation to Quechua speakers under Inca rule, the wounds of Spanish and subsequent Creole republican domination remain open sores for many Aymara. When Aymara language advocates refer to “decolonizing the language,” they refer to traces of Spanish colonialism in the language. This is what Neustupny (1989) calls an *idiom of purism*, or a metalanguage of language purity. Layme Pairumani’s (2002) explanation of vocalic elision as an impure residue of colonial contact with Spanish provides an Aymara example of an idiom of purism.

Any complete understanding of corpus planning should also include corpus planning of the *spoken* language. Neustupny (1989) distinguishes idioms of purism from *discourse purism*, the adoption of “pure” forms within discourse. The idiom of purism and the discourse of purism correlate in a sense to the relationship between prescribed or self-reported behavior and observed behavior. Looking at institutionally mass mediated language, such as radio in this case, provides just such an opportunity and allows us to examine both the idiom of purism as well as discourse purism.

Declarations on orthographic norms or dictionaries themselves have no agency of their own. They can gather dust, be ignored or be used within circuits of production, communication and correction where the authority they represent is recognized and replicated. This would have meant speech chains embedded within contexts of clerical education and colonial evangelization in the case of [the] Jesuit dictionaries, and in the case of Layme’s grammar, in teacher training and bilingual classrooms of the 1994 reform. Any standard or dictionary as such is merely the material residue, or “text artifact” of a prior social process, and has so-



cial consequences only so far as that social process is replicated within subsequent speech chains (Agha, 2007, p. 129). At RSG, the Aymara Language Department's monitoring of the language broadcast over RSG airwaves is a case of precisely such a speech chain, where authority is recognized and replicated. Additionally, the issues of orthographic standardization that have occupied a central place in discussions of corpus planning remain inadequate for a language like Aymara, as it is principally an oral language for the majority of its speakers.

### *Radio in Bolivia and RSG*

In our contemporary online age, radio might seem an anachronistic site for examining language use and LPP. Nevertheless, whether the Don Imus scandal, Tina Gross's popularity, or simply as the backdrop to people's commutes to work, radio remains an important feature of millions of people's daily lives in the U.S. and around the world. This may have much to do with the very logistics of radio, its accessibility, affordability and capacity for developing responsiveness to varied listening publics. In examining radio discourse in Israel/Palestine, Tamar Katriel has examined conflicting tropes of national personhood in talk shows (2004) and the mass mediated socialization of student social roles in educational programming (1991). Deborah Spitulnik's (1996) work in Zambia has demonstrated the ways models of speech transmitted on radio programming become recirculated in conversation as text fragments invoking the characterological stereotypes they represent in radio programs (westernized Africans, for example). Bolivian radio provides another venue to examine similar issues of mass mediated language as well as its possible role in Indigenous language maintenance and revitalization.

Radio enjoys a higher profile in Bolivia than many Latin American countries, and is more relied on for news and entertainment than in the U.S. or Europe (Albó, 1974; Archondo, 1991; O'Connor, 2006). Like many discussions of social phenomena in Bolivia, important antecedents of radio's social importance can be found among the miners. During the 1940s, miners established worker-run radio stations to counter the domination of the media by the oligarchy and multinational companies. The dominant political current among the miners was communist, and during the 1950s, the Catholic church founded radio stations in mining communities to counter the hegemony of communist broadcasting (O'Connor, 2006). The 1950s was a time of massive social upheaval and social progress for miners and highland Indigenous groups in Bolivia. In 1952, armed miners disbanded the national army, occupied La Paz, and nationalized the nation's mines. The revolution opened the door for highland Indigenous communities to overturn persisting feudal relations in the countryside, expropriating lands and evicting landlords (Dunkerley, 1984).

In the wake of the 1952 national revolution, a radio station was founded in the small Aymara community of Peñas near the shores of Lake Titicaca – Radio San Gabriel. The Maryknoll Jesuit founders named the station after the angel Gabriel, the messenger of god in their tradition. The aims of the radio were principally Spanish language literacy and Christian evangelization. Javier Hurtado (1987) writes in his history of RSG:

*La motivación principal de los padres Maryknoll para su trabajo entre los indios era, obviamente, la evangelización de una población que a pesar de cinco*

*siglos de cristianización seguía siendo pagana y lejos todavía de una fe cristiana monoteísta. Fue esta situación lo que los indujo a pensar en la necesidad de castellanizarlos, a través de la alfabetización, como medio indispensable para la evangelización: recibir la palabra de dios.* [The Maryknoll Fathers' principal motivation for their work among the Indians was, obviously, the evangelization of a population that despite five centuries of Christianization continued being pagan and still far from a monotheistic Christian faith. It was this situation that inducted them to thinking about teaching them Spanish, through literacy, as an indispensable means for evangelism: receiving the word of god.] (Hurtado, 1987, p.18 as cited in Ccama, 2006, p. 149; translation mine)

During RSG's beginnings, the radio's mission was to assimilate rural Aymara peasants into western models of Christianity and citizenship. This project changed in the 1970s when the radio shifted its orientation dramatically with regards to Aymara language and culture. In the 1970s, literacy campaigns became bilingual, and programming aimed to "recognize, value and promote cultural expressions of the people" (Ccama, 2006, p. 150). Emphasizing a shift towards an Aymara-centric approach, the radio established the *Centro Aymarista de Comunicación Social* [The Aymaraist Center of Social Communication] in 1971. By the radio's own account in their 50th anniversary commemorative history, the arrival of Father José Canut<sup>4</sup> in 1976 meant "*una relación con el Pueblo Aymara de manera horizontal, autoeducativa y socioeconómica, definiendo un cambio trascendental en la política de RSG*" [a relationship with the Aymara people marked by horizontality, self-education and socioeconomics, defining a transcendental change in the policy of RSG] (Radio San Gabriel, 2005, p. 80, translation mine). In the subsequent decades the Radio embraced Aymara cultural expressions, adapting them to Christian philosophy, and the radio station's programming became almost entirely in Aymara.

### **Aymara Status, Acquisition and Corpus Planning at RSG**

RSG includes an Aymara Language Department as a central work group within its organizational infrastructure. This department plays a central role in the production, revision and approval of scripts for the radio station as well as didactic materials for literacy and religious instruction. They operate within the radio station as Aymara language authorities, as a collective epicenter of "correct Aymara." In this sense, there is a self-conscious intervention at the level of corpus planning (Ferguson, 1968) concerning the maintenance of "pure" Aymara in all programming.

Discussions of language status planning are often concerned with the legal status of language within a nation-state or polity (Hornberger, 1994). In examining RSG's intervention in status planning, here we will be considering Aymara's social status within Bolivia more than its status as a co-official language of the Bolivian state. With many notable exceptions, Aymara is predominantly a language of poor people who continue to face the brunt of racist humiliation in a society still recovering from its colonial legacy. In contrast, Spanish remains a language of prestige and power, and has higher value in what Pierre Bourdieu (1991) terms the linguistic market. Not only a metaphorical market, RSG intervenes in the local labor market by attaching a price (salaried employment) to Aymara through its recruitment

and promotion of Aymara speakers *on the basis of language ability*. This, in turn, is closely related to the sense in which we can see RSG as operating within the field of language acquisition planning by promoting maintenance and cultivation of the language by its users (Cooper, 1989).

### *Status and Acquisition Planning*

RSG implements acquisition planning both within the radio station, as an institution, through its hiring practices, and beyond the institution in the community through its educational programming. Externally, the System of Long Distance Adult Self-Education (SAAD) engages in adult literacy in Aymara. SAAD workers distribute materials through parishes at the request of individuals and parishes. These materials are then used in coordination with programs broadcast over the radio. SAAD is exceptional in promoting Indigenous language literacy (for a more thorough discussion of Indigenous “remote education” see Ccama, 2006). My focus for this section, however, is to draw attention to the way in which RSG rewards Aymara language proficiency in its hiring practices and in the process does some work in raising the status of Aymara within the social sphere, specifically within the labor market.

Nearly the entire staff of the radio station is fluent in Aymara, and many began work there because of their proficiency in the language. One of the principle vehicles for hiring is through Aymara language literacy competitions. These contests are announced over the radio and held in El Alto at the radio station, evaluating participants’ reading, composition and locution in Aymara together with assessment of content areas of expertise. At the time of my research, the then current director of programming, the head of the Aymara Language Department, and a radio announcer/ member of the Aymara Language Department had all been hired by means of this process. Two of the three had previously been employed as rural primary teachers, another field where Aymara language skills have been valued.

The head of the Aymara Language Department spoke with me about his being hired through one such competition. Nominally, the competition dealt with “alternative education” but included a section on Aymara literacy:

|                  |  |   |
|------------------|--|---|
| <b>Karl:</b>     | <i>Entonces, Después de ser maestro rural<br/>¿cómo fue que,<br/>¿qué te motivó para venir para Radio San<br/>Gabriel después de eso?</i>  | So, after being a rural teacher<br>how was it that,<br>what motivated you to come to RSG after that?  |
| <b>Hilerión:</b> | <i>Había un concurso.<br/>Aquí en la radio central había un concurso.<br/>Así que en 1994 yo concursaba como docente.</i>  | There was a contest.<br>Here in the central radio there was a contest.<br>So it was 1994 when I competed as an instructor.  |
| <b>Karl:</b>     | <i>¿Y en qué consistió el concurso?</i>  | And what was involved in the contest?   |
| <b>Hilerión:</b> | <i>Educación alternativa.<br/>El concurso consistió en esto.<br/>Primero la base era<br/>la lecto-escritura aymara.<br/>Eso era la base,<br/>después conocimiento del área, después<br/>¿qué más me dio?<br/>Esos eran los temas más fuertes.<br/>Lecto-escritura aymara<br/>y después conocimiento del área<br/>y experiencia de trabajo también.<br/>De ese modo casi joven he llegado aquí.</i> | Alternative education.<br>The contest dealt with this.<br>First, the base was<br>reading and writing in Aymara.<br>That was the base,<br>afterwards knowledge of the area, then<br>what else did [they] give me?<br>Those were the hardest parts.<br>Aymara reading and writing<br>and afterwards knowledge of the area<br>and work experience too.<br>In that way almost a youth I arrived here. |

Another member of the Aymara Language Department, Celia, shared with me an account of her experience taking a similar exam. This exam, however, dealt primarily with translation, had typography as a requirement, and was exclusively for women. Celia describes in detail the others who participated in the competition, and her perception of their differences from them:

*Había una convocatoria aquí en la radio misma, lo han publicado, entonces yo he escuchado un ratito, o sea, un medio día un programa de felicitaciones, Aruntawi, en ese programa he escuchado. Y yo, yo me he dicho ¿Por qué no puedo ir? Convocatoria lo decía que tienen que saber leer y escribir Aymara, traducción, y también tienes que saber a escribir a máquina. Entonces, ¿Por qué no puedo ir? He venido un día lunes directo y dieron el examen, entonces para la competencia. He venido y allí estábamos, treinta éramos y estaban de la UMSA también, determinado comunicación había de lingüística de la UMSA. Y también de otros radios han venido también. Y allí. Cuando hemos venido nos han dado una hoja en castellano estaba escrito y nosotros eso tenemos que leer en Aymara, hablar en Aymara directo. En una hoja estaba dada y esto directo teníamos que hablar en Aymara - traducción. Y otro cuántas palabras puedes escribir en un minuto, y luego locución, cómo hablabas en Aymara...todo eso, si podemos hablar en radio me han preguntado y luego de eso...los que manejan este radio, los jefes, el personal, ellos han decidido, ya han decidido. [There was a notice right here at the radio, they published it, so I listened to it, one noon on the announcements program, Aruntawi, I heard it on that program. And I, I said to myself, "Why can't I go?" The notice said that (you'd) have to know to read and write Aymara, to translate, and also you'd have to know how to type. So, why can't I go? I came directly on a Monday and they gave the test, for the competition. I came and there we were, we were thirty, there were there from the UMSA (prestigious state university) too, there had been a certain communication with UMSA's linguistics department. They had also come from other radio stations. And there. When we came they gave us a sheet written in Spanish and we had to read it in Aymara, to speak directly into Aymara - translation. And another was how many words per minute you can write and later locution, how you spoke in Aymara . . . all that, the asked me if we could speak on the radio and after that . . . those who run this radio, the bosses, the personnel, they decided, they'd decided.*

Competing against trained linguists from Bolivia's most prestigious university and others with radio experience, a young woman, a native speaker of Aymara from a community near Lake Titicaca won the contest. This competition inverted the otherwise hegemonic linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991) operating in Bolivian society by privileging the rural, native speaker over the urban and university educated. Celia's ability to express herself eloquently in Aymara together with her metalinguistic awareness opened up the possibility to work in a salaried position in a prestigious institution. This point is not lost on Celia. From her experience being hired and through her experience at the station, her Aymara identity and language has afforded her prestige rather than contempt. The value of her language became evident within the interactional sequence of the interview I conducted with her. Upon interviewing her, she responded to my first question, posed in Spanish, in Aymara, effectively switching the code from Spanish to Aymara:

|               |  |   |
|---------------|--|---|
| <b>Karl:</b>  | <i>¿Cómo es que llegaste a la radio?</i>   | How did you come (to work) at the radio?  |
| <b>Celia:</b> | <i>¿Aka radiatorux?</i><br><i>¿En Aymara Castallanuti? (se ríe)</i>              | (Aymara) Here at the radio?<br>(Spanish) In Aymara?(Aym) or Spanish? (laughing) |
| <b>Karl:</b>  | <i>Cómo quieras, yo como</i><br><i>Cómo quieras</i>                              | (Spanish) As you please, because I<br>As you please                             |
| <b>Celia:</b> | <i>En Aymara y Castellano.</i>   | (Spanish) In Aymara and Spanish   |
| <b>Karl:</b>  | <i>Como quieras, como quieras.</i><br><i>Radio San Gabriel radiatorux qallta</i> | As you please, as you please<br>(Aymara) You began at RSG radio                 |
| <b>Celia:</b> | <i>¿kunjamas purinta?</i>  | How did I end up here?  |
| <b>Karl:</b>  | <i>¿kunjamas purinta?</i>  | How did you end you up here?  |

She proceeded to explain her arrival at RSG first in Aymara and then repeated her story in Spanish. Her confidence to respond to my Spanish-coded question in Aymara, bears no resemblance to the behavior of someone looking to accommodate another's lack of fluency in Aymara. Celia knew I could speak Aymara, even if with limited proficiency, and challenged me to conduct the interview in Aymara. This may seem like a small point, but some Aymara speakers deny speaking the language in order to assume a more "urban" or "sophisticated" presentation of self. This is a posture that Celia's entire existence is working to eradicate. Indeed, when I asked her what she liked most about her job, she responded simply, "*Claro, aquí ser Aymara. Me gusta ser Aymara*" [Clearly, here, being Aymara. I like being Aymara.]

### *Language Status and Corpus Planning*

Celia produces a daily morning program called *Lengua Aymara*, or Aymara Language, together with Hilerión, the director of the Aymara Language Department. The half hour program provides metalinguistic discussions of Aymara grammar, lexis and dialectology. The didactic tone of the program is consistent with the programmers' conception of it as a supplement to rural teachers' formation as experts in the Aymara language. Beyond the production of this program, the principal responsibility of their department is to monitor broadcasters' language. All programs for the radio must have their scripts approved not only by the director of programming, but also by the Aymara Language Department, whose members check scripts for proper Aymara language use. At all times there is at least one of the department's seven members listening to RSG programming. If any "aberrations" occur, members of the department follow protocols to notify, educate and, if need be, sanction perpetrators of verbal slippage. Through this monitoring and in their morning program, RSG's Aymara Language Department engage in corpus planning (Ferguson, 1968) by deciding what legitimately belongs within the Aymara lexicon. Following a brief discussion of the history of Aymara corpus planning, this section will examine more closely the protocols mentioned above and the introduction of neologisms on the program *Lengua Aymara*.

RSG's mass audience adds weight to the Aymara Language Department's conviction that announcers on RSG ought to serve as role models for Aymara



speech. Their charge as a department is to ensure a standard across the radio station's broadcasts, intervening prior to each broadcast by either writing, editing, or approving program scripts and then monitoring broadcasts for "aberrations." This word is not of my choosing, but comes from the department's protocol of "seguimiento" [following] of the broadcasts. While they monitor programming, they have a book with four columns on each page: *aberración* [aberration/ deformation], *léxico aymara* [Aymara lexical (item)], *fecha* [date], *firma* [signature]. Members of the Aymara Language Department record aberrations uttered on air, write the "correct" Aymara word, and have the offending party sign the register.

Like the title of the department's flagship program, *Lengua Aymara*, the heading of each column in the register is in the Spanish language, not Aymara. Despite the "decolonizing" aims of this protocol, Spanish remains the commenting and authoritative language within this framework.

In an interview with the director of the department, he showed me two recent examples from an early morning news broadcast:

*Kasta, kasta es préstamo, de castellano viene. May maya en Aymara tiene que decir. Phasillakiwa de "fácil es" pero aquí yachaykiwa en Aymara. El léxico aymara y la aberración que ha cometido, entonces el responsable está consciente, y firma. Así, todos los que tienen programa [emphasis added]. [Kasta, kasta is a loan, it comes from Spanish. May maya in Aymara [he] has to say. Phasillakiwa from "fácil es" (Eng=it's easy) but here yachaykiwa in Aymara. The Aymara lexical [item] and the aberration [he] has committed, then the responsible party is aware and signs. Like that for everyone who has a program.]*

Both *kasta* and *phasil* are loans from Spanish, but loans of different types. The second example, *phasil*, provides an example of phonological assimilation of a Spanish word *fácil*. Aymara does not have /f/ in its phonemic inventory, Aymara speakers have used the closest phoneme available, the aspirated voiceless bilabial stop /ph/. *Kasta* (type) is a different type of loan than *phasil*. It is from Spanish but is an archaic Spanish word that has long since fallen out of use and today would be expressed in Spanish with *tipo* or *variedad*. This is true of many loans in Aymara, including the very common word "to speak" – *parlaña*. The root is from archaic Spanish of the sixteenth century, *parlar*, that has fallen out of contemporary use. These loans are testament to 500 years of contact with Spanish and have likely been part of the daily speech of Aymara speakers for nearly as long.

The expulsion of loan words from the radio broadcasters' speech is the principal focus of *seguimiento*. When asked which were the most common errors on the programs his response was as follows:

Más en la radio es siempre incursión del préstamo. Yo mismo a veces, no me doy cuenta, pero sale, "has dicho esto." Ellos también están en la misma situación. Entonces escuchan la radio nos salta cuál es la palabra castellana que se preste. Los nombres no hay problema pero hay palabras habiendo y se presta. Esto es el problema. Por ejemplo, dicen minutos *minutus*. Dicen *Chika urutxa tunka minutunakampixiw*. Pero en Aymara ya tenemos *q'ata*. *Chika urutxa tunka q'atanakampixiw* y la gente entiendo, no es que no entiendo. ... Habla mi mamá, habla mi familia, usa esas palabras, entonces no podemos seguir *minutus, minutus* [em-



phasis added]. [More on the radio it's always the incursion of the loan. Even me sometimes, I don't even realize it, but it comes out, "you've said this." They also are in the same situation. So they listen to the radio and it jump out to us which is the Spanish word being borrowed. There's no problem with names but there are words that are there and they get borrowed. That's the problem. For example, they say *minutus*. They say *Chika urutxa tunka minutunakampixiw* (Aymara: ten minutes past noon). But in Aymara we already have *q'ata*. *Chika urutxa tunka q'atanakampixiw* and people understand, it's not that they don't understand. ... My mother says it, my familia says it, they use those words, so we can't continue *minutus*, *minutus*.]

At the opening of the passage, Hilarión reanimates a link in a speech chain organized around the disciplining of Aymara at RSG through his use of reported speech –“You've said this.” In an act of self-deprecation, the culprit breaking the standard of purity to which RSG aspires is Hilarión. The Aymara language authority (and enforcer of the norm) admits that he too is guilty of using the Spanish loan word – “I don't realize it, but it comes out,” the example he goes on to provide as a typical aberration is a sentence telling the time- “it's ten past noon.” The sentence in question contains the phonologically assimilated version of the Spanish word *minutos* to *minutus*, instead of the more “pure” *q'ata*. Technologies for dividing time into units like minutes and seconds is not endogenous to rural Andean experience. It is not so surprising then that a Spanish loan word is widely used for this concept and also larger units of time like days, weeks and months. These too provide material for Aymara corpus planning at RSG. The seven-day week being a Western concept, it follows that these terms entered Aymara as Spanish loans, phonologically assimilated into the language. The neologisms, contrary to what one might expect, seem to have retained certain European etymological roots (see Table 1). In English, for example, “Thursday” has its roots in the day of the pre-Christian god of lightening, Thor, and the star *ch'aska* for the day named for Venus, the goddess of love.

Table 1  
*Aymara Neologisms: Days of the Week*

| Spanish day       | Spanish loan | Neologism   | Direct Gloss     |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| Lunes [Mon.]      | Lunis        | Phaxsi uru  | Moon day         |
| Martes [Tues.]    | Martis       | Saxra uru   | War day          |
| Miércoles [Weds.] | Mirculis     | Wara uru    | Star day         |
| Jueves [Thurs.]   | Jwivis       | Illapa uru  | Lightning day    |
| Viernes [Fri.]    | Wirnis       | Ch'aska uru | Venus (star) day |
| Sábado [Sat.]     | Sabatu       | Kurmi uru   | Rainbow day      |
| Domingo [Sun.]    | Tuminku      | Inti uru    | Sun day          |

In the following excerpt from the opening of *Lengua Aymara* we can see an example of the introduction of the neologisms for days (*illapa uru/ illapiru* – “Thursday”), week (*päqallqanaka* instead of *simana*) and months (*llamayu* – “May”). Like many radio programs, the announcer greets the public and announces the day, but

this announcing of the date quickly becomes more complicated than on a typical morning radio program.

**CELIA:** *Kamisaki jilata kullakanakax?*  
*Jallakipaxa nayasa jumanakaruxa arunt'tatapxta*  
*Lengua Aymara wakichaypunirakinivwa*  
*wasitat Radio tuqin qamart'asipkarakta*  
*Radio San Gabriel ist'apkarapta pätunka*  
*provincianakaxa* *arunt'atarakivwa*  
*qhirwanakana suntanakana [????]nakana*  
*thayampis wichhumpi, chikt'ataw jumanakax*  
*ist'iraksta Radio jallakipanaya sasina arunt'atapta.*

How are you brothers and sisters?  
 I'd like to welcome you as always  
 with the program Aymara Language  
 here at the radio. You're living with  
 Radio San Gabriel, listening in twenty  
provinces you're greeted  
 in valleys, in the heights, in the [????]  
 with the cold and wind  
 you're listening to the radio's message  
 saying you are greeted [welcome].

**HILERIÓN:** *Jallakipana achachila awicha*  
*kamaraki **mama t'alla** mallku kawwirinakas*  
*jilata kullaka kamaraki wayna tawaqunakaraki*  
*jisk'alalanaka jumanakasa arunt'taxarapta*  
*jichhurux niyaw ukaxa **illapiuru** ukjamaxraki*  
*aka llamay phaxsin niyaw akaxa tunka urunaka*  
*mäkiptawayxi. urunakas päqanakas*  
*phaxsinakas jalakpun jaliwa*  
*chikamaru puriñanixa*  
*aka Calendario Gregoriano*  
*ukanxa utjiti wasa yatiqsta*  
*machax maraxa jak'achasinkaraki.*  
*Jilata Martín Tarki jupampi chikañtasiñani*  
*ukjamaxa sapumayniw arunt'atapta*  
*qallantañanivwa wakichawisampi.*

Grandfathers and grandmothers  
 even **mama t'allas** and mallkus  
 brother, sister and even young boys, girls  
 and little ones you are all welcome  
 Now that it's **Thursday**, like that  
 in this month of May, ten days  
 are almost done. The days, the weeks  
 the months are always running, flying.  
 We're arriving at the middle  
 of this Gregorian calendar  
 in that you know  
 the new year is approaching.  
 Together with brother Martin Tarki  
 every one of you is welcomed  
 we'll start with our program.

Hilerión pronounces the bolded words in the transcript above more slowly and with raised pitch, creating an intonational parallelism between the two words *mama t'alla* and *illapiuru*. A *mama t'alla* is a rotating position of political authority for women within traditional Aymara community political organization. The husband of the *mama t'alla* is the *mallku*, or leader, of the community. Poetically linking the neologism *illapa uru*<sup>5</sup> with a title emblematic of traditional Aymara political organization co-textually imbues this neologism with values of tradition and authority. It is configured within a discursive diagram of Aymara authenticity as parallel to *mama t'alla*.

The conflicting, or at least overlapping, construal of time made explicit in the opening of the radio program highlight the issues underpinning the very neologisms introduced – days of the week and months. The announcers use the neologism *illapiuru* instead of the more common *jwivis*, and other neologisms (underlined) such as *llamay phaxsin* [month of May] and *päqanaka* instead of *simanas* [weeks]. Not only does he announce the day, but he situates it within both the Western, Christian calendar (“it’s now the month of May” and “the middle of the Gregorian Calendar”) and with respect to the upcoming Aymara new year, marked by the winter solstice. Hilerión poses two conflicting orientations to two distinct time frames – one Western and one Aymara. The incongruity of these two conflicting frames brings the denotation of units of time and the use of neologisms for them into discursive focus.

The eradication of Spanish loans is incomplete, however, and there is also use of the Spanish loan *provincianaka*, *provincia* being a loan from Spanish and *-naka* the Aymara pluralizer. In this case, there is even a reasonable Aymara equivalent; there were political administrative subdivisions in prequest

times - the *suyu*. Perhaps one of her colleagues approached her later to sign off in the book! Celia's inadvertent use of Spanish perhaps mirrors Hilerión's, who had stated earlier, "*No me doy cuenta pero sale.*"

Even with his focused intervention in Aymara corpus planning through the introduction and enforcement of lexical reform in the Aymara spoken on RSG airwaves, Hilerión acknowledges the need to recognize language diversity among speakers of Aymara. When asked about the policy he takes as director of the Aymara Language Department with regards to regional differences he included urban speech as legitimate dialect:

*Las variantes se respeta. Respetamos en la radio las variantes, y hay tantos años que trabajamos y que ha llegado, por ejemplo, el Aymara de los yungas es un poco más castellanizado. Y después un aymaré de Pakajes es más, tiene ochenta por ciento, setenta por ciento de pureza nativa. Un ciudadano también tiene otro tipo de lenguaje, es más, igual está en pleno préstamo. Entonces, en ese sentido, no tenemos problemas. Respetamos los variantes dialectales.* [The variants are respected. We respect the variants on the radio, and there are so many years that we work and the Aymara of the Yungas arrived, for example, is a little more Castillianized. And later the Aymara of Pakajes, has eighty per cent, seventy per cent of native purity. A city dweller also has another type of language, it's more, equally it's full of loan words. So, in that sense, we don't have problems. We respect the dialectal variants.]

Whereas previously he had identified the use of loans as the principle error committed by announcers, here it is identified as an aspect of regional variation including not only the urban areas but also the Yungas, the tropical valleys to the north of La Paz. This recognition of, and professed tolerance of, loans as one aspect of Aymara language variation seems to be in direct contradiction to the institutional practice of policing loan words in broadcasters' speech described above.

It does not seem, however, that the corpus planning going on at RSG is intended only for the urban Aymara whose language is "full of loans." In Hilerión's estimation between a fifth and a quarter of the Aymara spoken by his model rural resident of Pakajes would be Spanish loans. While recognizing regional variation, RSG's language purism aims to bring lexical reform to all sectors of the Aymara speaking population.



*Picture 2.* A member of the Aymara Language Department develops a program script in consultation with reference books for Aymara grammar and vocabulary.

### Discussion

RSG provides a local example of acquisition, status and corpus planning for the Aymara language. Concerning acquisition and status planning at RSG, the active recruitment not only of Aymara speakers, but of people who speak Aymara eloquently and commit themselves to Aymara literacy can serve as a positive model

both of acquisition planning, in the sense that it provides incentive to speakers of the language to develop their language skills, and can also model status planning in that it attaches a price to the skill within a linguistic market, namely, salaried employment. The diffusion of neologisms over the airwaves and the careful monitoring of language use at RSG, provides one example of corpus planning at one epicenter of Aymara language and culture.

The Aymara Language Department's efforts to enforce purity in their language may remind readers in the Anglophone world of the condescending schoolmarm correcting others' "proper" English use. Certainly, language purism projects necessarily involve language correction, demarcating what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate forms of reference. The schoolmarm comparison would be misguided in this case, obscuring the political context and content of Aymara language purism. Language purism has emerged for many groups within moments of social change, in response to perceived or real pressures on minority communities, or national consolidation as a kind of "battle cry" (Jernudd, 1989, p. 3). Particularly within a context of social oppression, a sense of moral obligation to defend and uphold the language is related to the conflation of language and ethnic identity. Speaking to the moral discourse within some language revitalization projects, Joshua Fishman writes: "Since the beloved language is closely and inseparably associated with other verities, the moral imperatives that exist to defend the latter also directly and obviously apply to the language as well. Not to do so would be unthinkable and clearly morally reprehensible" (Fishman, 1997, p. 73). Zimmerman (1999) argues that language planning should be a moral and ethical project that recognizes its own polemical nature within contested and competing assessments of language use in a community, a project whose fate should be determined by and with those affected by the planning (Zimmerman, 1999, p. 33).

The Bolivian government may well be in a position to enact quotas for radio and television in broadcasting, for example, thereby expanding opportunities for Aymara, and other Indigenous language, speakers. This could make tremendous gains for the prospects of language maintenance and development as well as changing prospects for the social status of the language. Advancing a policy of "positive rights" (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006) with regard to language use in the public sphere would also be in line with this year's historic decision of the United Nations concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples. Central to that declaration is the advancement of positive rights for Indigenous peoples to strengthen their languages and institutions. At RSG, even if a small example, we see both.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mission/enduringvoices/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Shortly after the election of Evo Morales to the presidency, the new Minister of Education, Félix Patzi, advanced a policy that would require civil servants to prove proficiency in the indigenous language of their region. This initiative was abandoned even prior to Patzi's forced resignation in 2007, but seems to have had some effect on professional schools that now include Aymara or Quechua instruction in their curricula.

<sup>3</sup> The Aymara phonemic inventory includes contrastive vowel length and both a velar fricative [h] and a uvular fricative [x], whereas many southern Quechua varieties have only the velar fricative or both in free variation (Adelaar, 2004). Besides these differences, the two languages largely share the same phonemic inventory.

<sup>4</sup> Father José Canut's arrival coincides with the death of Gral. Franco, beginning a period of massive sociolinguistic changes in Canut's home of Catalonia (Woolard, 1989; Rodá-Bencells, 2009). We might consider Canut as pertaining to a Catalan Jesuit current in XX century Indigenous language work including Xavier Albó, working in Bolivia, and Bartolomeu Meliá, working in Paraguay, both prolific linguistic anthropologists with scholarly trajectories tied to their roles as Jesuit priests. An open question might be to what extent Canut, Albó and Meliá's commitments to Indigenous languages emerged from their own experiences as Catalonians within the Spanish state.

<sup>5</sup> The difference between the spelling of *illapa uru* and Hilerión's pronunciation is an example of the gap between the Aymara orthographic norm and pronunciation with vowel elision: the second *a* is replaced with a lengthened initial *u* --> *illapüru*.

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