

Noqanchis Magazine: Using Print Media to Promote Cool and Quechua in Cuzco

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of *Noqanchis* magazine. *Noqanchis* is written in Quechua and has been part of a funded project of the *Centro Huamán Poma de Ayala*, Cuzco, Peru, to promote Quechua in the city. In the magazine, all of the text is in Quechua and the images are all of indigenous people. The cultural studies concept of the principle of Cool is discussed in relation to the Quechua culture and *Noqanchis*. The preliminary results of interviews conducted with four members of the project team are presented. Initial analysis shows that the magazine has garnered considerable interest from the younger generations as well as the Quechua-speaking community in Cuzco. Moreover, the magazine has generated discussions on the language outside of Cuzco. Perhaps the most important finding is that the magazine has been a catalyst for resurgence of written Quechua in the city.

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of a print media strategy to revitalise Quechua in the city of Cuzco, Peru. *Noqanchis* Magazine was an initiative of the *Centro Huamán Poma de Ayala*, a Non-Government Organization (NGO) which for the last thirty-two years has worked towards the building of a just society for all people, placing emphasis on the most vulnerable people in the city of Cuzco.

The aim of this research study is to investigate how magazines, such as *Noqanchis*, can be used as vehicles to engage younger speakers of languages like Quechua as part of global language revitalisation strategies. The paper raises the principle of "Cool" in relation to the growing appeal of Quechua with the younger generations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine members of the *Noqanchis* publication team; the preliminary analysis of four interviews is presented.

This paper builds on research that was conducted in Huallanca, Peru. Here, I extend my earlier research wherein I found that teenagers were the most difficult group to engage in language revitalisation strategies due to the pressure of globalisation and conformity (Funegra, 2011). What I wanted to investigate was why a magazine, such as *Noqanchis*, has worked as a strategy to engage younger generations in speaking, reading and being proud of their Quechua heritage.

Background

Efforts to revitalise indigenous languages is by no means a new or novel occurrence. In fact, there is a substantial amount of research that has been undertaken on efforts to promote languages. Studies, such as the seminal article by Krauss (1992), resulted in an increase in the focus of research in linguistics to raise awareness of the language revitalisation movement. There are numerous reasons why there is a global focus on language revitalisation efforts, such as initiatives like *Noqanchis*. This is perhaps best articulated by Dixon

(1997: 116), who stated that "language is the most precious human resource" and that each language is unique in that it has its own different phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic organization. This value of language as a unique and priceless entity is further espoused by Crystal (2000: 34), who declared that "language is the most important part of human expression, rituals, music, painting, crafts and all other forms of behaviour all play their part, but language plays the largest part of all".

The relationship between language and culture is vital. It was argued by Miyaoka (2001: 9) that "The disappearance of any language represents a loss of intellectual heritage not only for the people but for humanity as a whole. It is evident that the vitality of the language as a form of cultural identity is extremely important". It is only by studying the various possibilities across all languages that we, as researchers, can gain a deeper understanding of the role that language has on culture and identity.

The Principle of Cool and cultural identity

"Ethnic absolutism is out. Cool is in" (Maher, 2005: 89). Maher (2005), in his study of metroethnicity in Japan, examined the role of "cool" in ethnic allegiance and how people use non ethnic criteria to feel affiliated to a language and cultural group. What he argues is that younger generations intentionally decide to align with a particular group on the basis of questions, such as: is it a cool thing to do? Or is it a cool thing to be? So identification with a group is more of an accessory that is subject to aesthetic demands, as opposed to a sense of ethnolinguistic duty. According to Maher (2005), being cool is to be quirky, innovative and tolerant. Cool is an attitude and it is also hope. So what is being put forth here in the principle of Cool is the idea that in ethnic minorities that are often viewed as being marginalised

or disenfranchised there is a new cultural track emerging from younger generations that values the street credibility of the minorities (Maher, 2005).

Scholars of the theme of "cool" in general agree that the attitude cool came from Africa. According to McGuigan (2006), cool refers to composure in battle, heat, and life, and had particular relevance for young males. He explains that when Africans were forced into slavery in the Americas, the term "itutu" or cool became a way to maintain a sense of dignity in oppressive conditions. He further adds that there is an obvious connection between slavery, jazz culture and more modern forms of music, such as hip-hop and rap. The word "cool" has become an everyday form of approval, meaning "good" or "okay", so in this way the term which originally meant resistance to subjugation and humiliation is now a way into the hearts of young consumers (McGuigan, 2006). Younger generations easily adapt and construct identity through language choice (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004; Luykx, 2000). At one level, authority and social structures, including education and family, influence language use. Two ways that this manifests is through teenager peer pressure and the shift driven by the younger generation themselves through their increasing connections with the word beyond the community's boundaries (Luykx, 2000).

In my earlier research, for example, Funegra (2011), I found that teenagers were the most difficult people to engage with the Quechua language and culture as they wanted to belong to a cosmopolitan world. Consequently, they were the most challenging people to interview on this matter as they tended to deny or be embarrassed by their Quechua heritage. However, in this paper, I will discuss how a "cool" strategy of using print media has provided social currency for younger generations in affiliating with Quechua.

Print media as a language revitalisation strategy

The use of print media as a means of promoting a language may seem outdated with increasing access to the internet and the growth of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook. However, numerous studies have shown that there is still a significant divide between those that have access to such technologies and those that do not. For example, Selwyn (2009) in his argument against the myth of digital natives explains that females, those living in rural and remote areas and those that are from minority cultural and linguistic backgrounds have less access to technology. In this respect, the speakers of Quechua are most likely to fall into these minority groups that do not have access to technology. Hence, strategies to promote the value of the language need to be both visible and accessible to the target population.

Noqanchis Magazine

The title *Noqanchis* means *nosotros* in Spanish or *we* in English. The magazine was funded as part of an NGO project from 2011 to 2012. The project promoted social inclusion and equality of gender as well as cultural awareness. In a sense, the project can be aligned with Fishman's (1991, 2000) eight-stage model of language revitalisation. In stage six, Fishman (1991: 199) advocates focusing revitalisation efforts:

Creating the intergenerationally continuous [Quechua] speaking community via providing and stressing the link to family life, residential concentration and neighbourhood institutions.

This project was supported by the Basque government in Spain through another NGO, *Solidaridad internacional del país vasco*.

Noqanchis started with the aim of breaking the popular stereotypes of Quechua speakers in mainstream society as being a parochial or backward language. The magazine was trying to compete with publications of the same kind that are directed to the middle class and the upper class of the Cuzco society and present a range of popular topics. The magazine had the same format of magazines, such as *Vogue*, and included fashion as well as editorials. Celebrities, such as actress/singer Magaly Solier, were interviewed for the magazine. The fashion spreads were modern and edgy, the models and backgrounds were intentionally appealing to younger generations in that they were aiming for cool rather than traditional. *Noqanchis* magazine was specifically directed to the sector of mainstream society that speaks Quechua in Cuzco. The images in the magazine depicted people of indigenous heritage and all text was in Quechua. In this sense, the magazine was unique in Peru in that all of the text was in Quechua and not Spanish. Moreover, the magazine had images of both males and females on the cover and in the photo shoots (see Figure 1) as a strategy to appeal to both a male and female audience.

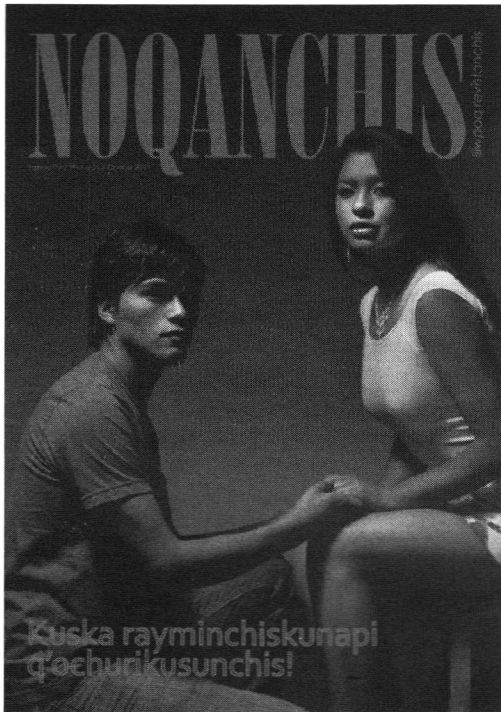


Figure 1: Cover image of *Noqanchis* magazine

Noqanchis was a pictorial publication in that images of Cuzco residents featured throughout the editions. These included images of social events, traditional festivities in Cuzco, places of work, markets and sport events are all included in the magazine, along with the fashion shoots and short articles. The magazine featured children and adults in the social pages. All of the people who appeared in the magazine were Quechua speakers (Figure 2). The aim of the magazine was to both celebrate and normalise Quechua. So it combined high-end fashion with local events and people.

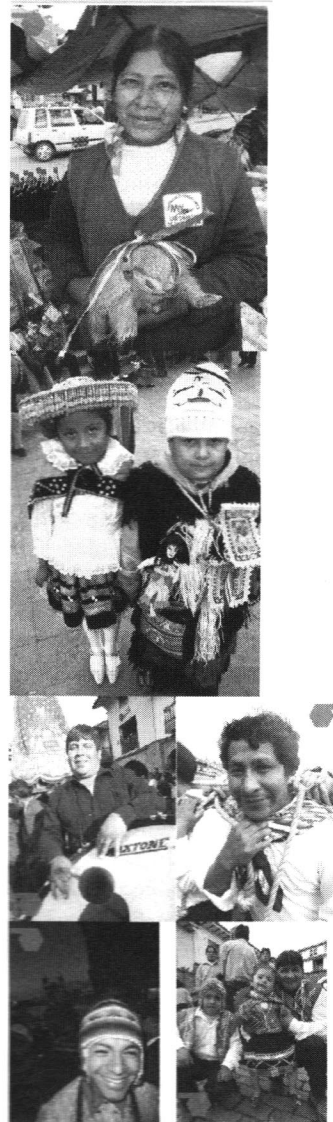


Figure 2: Social pages of *Noqanchis*

The magazine was published quarterly and five editions in total were published in 2012. The project team had hoped for a few more editions. However, a lack of further funding from the European Union meant that the project did not continue. No further funding sources were found. *Noqanchis* was free. However, it had a publicity company who advertised on the radio and television. There was also an online version of the magazine. The magazine was distributed by hand to lower socio-economic areas where there was a high proportion of Quechua speakers. The magazine was also distributed to media outlets, juice stalls at the markets, coffee shops in the city, hairdressers and other places. The magazine was also distributed in Paris.

The long-term viability of Noqanchis

At the time of conducting my interviews with members of the magazine team, the future of the magazine was unknown. Financial problems within the European Union meant that there was doubt as to whether the project's funding was to be extended beyond one year. It was hoped a group of young people in Cuzco, who were interested in the magazine, would continue the project and publish the magazine. There was also interest from commercial areas to sponsor the magazine. The only condition of the project team was that the advertisements remain in Quechua.

Methodology

An interpretive ethnographical approach was used in this study. The core aim of this study was to capture the voices and stories of people, in a natural setting (Brewer, 2004). An interpretivist methodology was applied for this study. An interpretive approach was adopted as interpretive approaches rely heavily on naturalistic methods, such as interviewing and observation and analysis of existing texts. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study. The interviews were designed to elicit information on social life, the magazine, the participant's hopes for the magazine and their opinions about the value of print media to engage the younger generation of Quechua speakers. In the interviews discussed here, I used a set of questions that acted as a guide, but the interviews were more like a conversation that I changed to allow for deviations from the set questions as the interviews progressed (O'Reilly, 2005). This enabled the participants to provide a rich narrative of their experiences with Noqanchis.

The interpretivist method aims to ensure that there is an adequate dialogue between myself and the interviewees in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality. Angen (2000) put forward several criteria for evaluating research from an interpretivist perspective:

1. Careful consideration and articulation of the research question
2. Carrying out inquiry in a respectful manner
3. Awareness and articulation of the choices and interpretations the researcher makes during the inquiry process and evidence of taking responsibility for those choices
4. A written account that develops persuasive arguments
5. Evaluation of how widely results are disseminated

Angen (2000) also proposed that to ensure moral validity that the inquiry should be undertaken in the discourse of the research community. These criteria were adopted for the study.

Participants

There were nine participants interviewed for the study. In this paper, I will provide an overview of the results of four of the interviews. All four participants participated directly in *Noqanchis*. One interview was conducted

with Luis Nieto. Luis is the editor of several publications and periodicals in Cuzco. For example, he is the current editor of "Cronicas Urbanas", an annual publication on Quechua. He is involved in the promotion and distribution of *Noqanchis* and he is also on the editorial board. The interview was conducted in January 2013 in Cuzco. I conducted the second interview with Jorge Vargas, in Cuzco in January 2013. Jorge was in charge of the publication of the magazine.

The third interview was with Hilda Cañari. Hilda was the editor for the Quechua language in the magazine. She was a fluent Quechua speaker. Her interview was in Quechua, and Jorge Vargas acted as translator. Her interview was transcribed from Quechua to Spanish by a third party. The fourth interview was with Erica Valer Barcena, who was a model in one of the *Noqanchis* issues. I transcribed all the interviews from Spanish into English.

Results

A preliminary analysis of the interviews is presented in the results. The main aim of the preliminary analysis is to identify how the initiative is being used to promote Quechua and how this form of print media may be used as an effective means of language revitalisation in a globalised world.

One of the main findings, at this stage, is that the magazine is gaining support from younger generations and is encouraging discourse in Quechua. Vargas stated that:

The models [with Quechua features] are young, beautiful, happy and rich. The Quechua culture is usually linked to poverty, old age and sorrow.

This resonates with Maher's (2005) discussion of cool in that rather than being associated with the negative stereotype of poor, old and oppressed, Quechua is being presented as being attractive, wealthy and modern.

According to both Nieto and Vargas, there has been a strong interest in the magazine from the younger generations. Vargas and Nieto explained that all correspondence was conducted in Quechua and the people who write letters in Quechua to the magazine received responses in Quechua. They both feel that this was a rewarding exercise as younger generations were using Quechua and not Spanish to communicate. They explained that the younger generations not only wanted their photos included in the periodical, but they want to write articles as well. Vargas added that the magazine was supporting a new wave of Quechua learners, those who had missed the opportunity to learn from their parents. Now they have the opportunity to learn and embrace Quechua as it has a public voice.

These views on the role of the magazine on promoting Quechua as cool were echoed by Hilda who clarifies:

The reason we choose young people is because later on they will have kids, then if we reinforce

the Quechua language, these young people will transmit it to their children, they will already have the idea. That's why we are focusing on young people.

Erica, who was pregnant at the time of the interview, perhaps provided the most personal reflection of the use of Quechua in stating that:

I would love that everyone was speaking Quechua in Cuzco. My children will be born in this city and they must also know Quechua. Friends, we must think and speak Quechua, everyone should know, we must teach our children. It is also what I want for my kids. They also will learn to speak Quechua, I will teach them, even their names will be in Quechua.

Nieto explained that the magazine was gaining attention from academics as well. He stated that academics have started researching the impact that the magazine has had not only in Cuzco, but in Lima and the United States, too. Interest is also coming from other forms of print media and television.

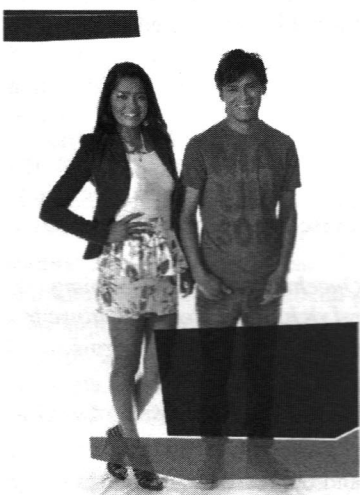


Figure 3: Models from an article in *Noqanchis* magazine

One of the more interesting findings arising from the interviews is that this magazine challenged the stereotypes presented in other magazines that Peruvians are of European heritage. According to Vargas, the advertising in Cuzco is targeted to the middle class, which is mainly at “white” people (10 per cent of the population), that is, people of European heritage. Normally, being white is associated with beauty, happiness and success. Vargas further explained that what this means is that even if you are beautiful, happy and successful there is a kind of rejection of “the colour of our skin, the colour of our eyes, of our height, the shape of our noses that prevents us from feeling completely fulfilled”. We still lack that whiteness. *Noqanchis*, however, has shown that indigenous people are beautiful. The photos in the magazine show a range

of people from young to old in the social pages and the photo shoots show indigenous people modelling current fashions. Figure 3 shows an article from the magazine featuring both a male and female model.

What this means for the younger generation of Quechua speakers is that the beauty that they were once excluded from now includes them. As far as culture and identity are concerned, having beautiful people in magazines may seem like a shallow way to engage people in a language, but as younger generations are more greatly influenced by peer pressure and social influences, this may be one of the factors that has contributed to the success of the magazine.

There was some backlash against the magazine. Vargas said that some members of the public are citing “reverse racism”, and that the magazine may be creating discrimination rather than preventing it. However, most of the support was overwhelmingly positive. Overall, according to Vargas, the magazine was a new avenue of empowering Quechua from speakers within the community. It also promotes the power of written Quechua within different strata of society.

Conclusions

What is presented in this paper is a very brief overview of the efforts of the *Noqanchis* project team to revitalise Quechua in Cuzco through the use of a magazine. The future of the magazine, at this stage, is unknown. The fact that it has garnered support from the Basque Government and external agencies means that there is recognition at an international level for the magazine as a revitalisation strategy. Both Vargas and Nieto explained that the magazine has also garnered interest from different strata of the Cuzco community.

Moreover, the magazine has been popular with younger generations, perhaps because Quechua has become cool. It has, in places, attained a status of being something to be associated with rather than being associated with the usual negative stereotypes. Younger generations have shown an interest in contributing to the magazine, and, as a consequence, revitalising written Quechua in Cuzco. This is perhaps one small step in the process; however, that small step means a lot to the indigenous people of Cuzco in finding a voice for their language, culture and identity. If cool works, then let Quechua be cool.

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