

Ecuadorian Indigenous Language and Education Policy and Practice: Recent Challenges and Advances

Marleen Haboud
PUCE, Ecuador

Kendall King
Georgetown University, U.S.A.

Introduction

As detailed in previous work on language policy in Ecuador (King & Haboud, 2002), the 1988 reformed Ecuadorian Constitution explicitly recognised the multilingual and multicultural nature of the country (Article 1) and provided the legal opening for expanded Indigenous rights. Ecuador's Indigenous groups, or *nacionalidades*, were granted specific rights, including the right to social and economic development without loss of their identity, culture, or territory; the right to culturally appropriate education; and the right to participate actively in all decisions impacting them as individuals and as communities. To this end, Article 84 of the Constitution established that support, development, and reinforcement of Indigenous people's communities would be recognised and guaranteed; further, Indigenous traditional ways of life and social organisation, including the exercise of authority and law, would be preserved and developed. Appropriate policies have been in place for some time to support Indigenous language education and Indigenous language maintenance; the ongoing challenge has been to develop the programs and activities to meet these lofty aims.

Since 2002, when our overview first appeared in *Current Issues in Language Planning*, Ecuador has undergone a period of political turmoil and has been governed by three different presidents. The most recent, Rafael Correa, elected in November, 2006, is a U.S.-and-European-educated economist who has focused on addressing Ecuador's debt, but who also publicly supports greater inclusion of Indigenous Ecuadorians in government, and in his first months in office created a new Ministry of Culture with this aim. Correa is the eighth president to serve Ecuador in the past decade. Among other 2006 candidates was Luis Macas, a Quichua native from the Andean highlands of Saraguro and co-founder and current president of the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) (CONAIE), the largest Indigenous organisation in Ecuador. Macas, who came in sixth place, represented the Pachakutik Movement, whose platform consisted of, among other things, defense of Indigenous rights.

With the adoption of the U.S. dollar as the only Ecuadorian currency in 2000 and subsequent inflation and instability, many Ecuadorians, including those in

the Indigenous sectors, face economic hardships. In 2003, 40 per cent of the population was estimated to live in poverty (CIA World Factbook, 2007). Since 2000, many Ecuadorians have sought employment in Spain and the United States, leaving their land and families behind, sometimes permanently. The European Union reports that around 500,000 Ecuadorian emigrants send money back to Ecuador (European Union, 2005); these monetary transfers are said to make up the second largest source of revenue for Ecuador after oil (European Union, 2005).

In the Ecuadorian highland regions, these developments – and in particular large-scale international migration – have resulted in on-going challenges to both Indigenous language maintenance and the implementation of intercultural bilingual education in many Indigenous communities. In many regions, teachers are among the most educated and most mobile, and the first to leave Ecuador for the United States or Spain. More generally, migration is linked with a shift in values towards the international labour market and away from local, community-based agricultural work. Fieldwork in southern highland Ecuador in August 2006 by King and Haboud suggested that many Indigenous community members were well aware of these shifts, and often troubled by them, as evident here in the conversation between King and a southern highland woman named Rosa.

	<i>Spanish original</i>	<i>English translation</i>
Rosa	No hay control de nada. Será por la migración. Será por la televisión. Será por el estudio Kendall estamos muy perdidos ya. Mucho mucho mucho . . . Por eso le [el marido de Rosa] dijo Kendall hay un cambio en todo, en todo, todo cosa hay bastante cambio.	There is no control of anything. Maybe it's because of migration. Maybe it's because of television. Maybe it's because of school. Kendall we are already so lost . . . So much so much so much. For that reason, he [Rosa's husband] told you, Kendall, that there is a change in everything in every everything there is enough change.
King	¿Por qué ha cambiado tanto?	Why has it changed so much?
Rosa	Los jóvenes ya no quieren trabajar.	The youth does not want to work anymore.
King	¿En la sierra?	In the mountains?
Rosa	Sí.	Yes.

As Rosa observes here, migration can be linked with profound shifts in community values and a devaluing of local work practices (in this case, traditional agricultural work), and as many others noted during our August fieldwork (2006), with continued shift away from Quichua and towards Spanish.

While there has been little formal, national-level language planning activity in Ecuador in the last four years since the original monograph was written, in the face of such challenges, many Indigenous communities have been active at the local and national levels, engaging in educational and community efforts which have implications for Indigenous maintenance and language shift. In this

article we highlight these issues as examples of the way the political, social and economic aspects of the ecological context impact language policy in a particular polity. We examine four instances where such local, and at times 'unplanned' (Baldauf, 1994; Eggington, 2002), language planning activity can be found: Indigenous education efforts in the Amazonian lowlands; elementary and secondary education planning and policy; higher education planning and policy; and advances in language material production and public programming.

Challenges and advances to Indigenous education in the lowlands

While there is great linguistic and cultural diversity across the Amazonian lowlands of Ecuador, there is also a shared history of contact with and colonisation due to religious missions, the rubber boom, *mestizo* relocation promoted by the State as part of the Agrarian Reform of 1964 (Ibarra, 1992), the oil boom, and more recently, tourism, armed guerrillas and militarisation (CONAIE, 2006; Haboud, 2006; Santos, 1996; SILAE, 2003; Vaca, n.d.). (Migration has been less severe within the lowland Amazonian regions.) These multiple and varied factors make the Amazon a complex and heterogeneous region, but one which is subject to shared tensions: on the one hand, Westernisation and the resultant tendency towards Spanish, and on the other, resistance to these forces and an interest in cultural and linguistic maintenance (Santos, 1996).

Important forces for linguistic and cultural maintenance are the local language and education programs by Amazonian Indigenous communities themselves. These efforts can be traced back to the work of the Shuar Federation in the 1960s, which based their defense of local culture not in terms of traditional dress, music or language alone, but within a broader context that included their world view, and was linked to their land, education, language, forms of organisation and production. As a result of their early work, other Indigenous Amazon groups formed similar federations with the shared goal of cultural defence and the defeat of colonisation. A key example, described in King and Haboud (2002): in 1980, the *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon) (CONFENIAE) was formed – a group which fights for the control of territory as a base for the survival of its people. In 2003, this organisation, together with representative organisations of each region of the country,¹ made a declaration protesting against the violation of collective rights and the intrusion of oil and mining companies into Indigenous territories (ARGENPRESS, 2003). They also joined forces with the *Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe del Ecuador* (National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education of Ecuador) (DINEIB) and other organisations and specialists to document and promote the values of material and spiritual culture of Indigenous communities of the Amazon, and to facilitate Indigenous groups' access to and appropriate adaptation of scientific advances and modern technologies.

In a similar way, the Coordinator of the *Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica* (Indigenous Organisations of Amazonian Cuenca) (COICA) is currently working jointly with the CONFENIAE and its grassroots organisations to develop new Amazon protection projects, in particular ecotourism. Each of these projects rests on the multilingual reality of the region as well as the diversity of bilingual situations and language contact. From this per-

spective, COICA seeks to promote 'the development of the mother language (or language of predominate use), whether it be the indigenous language or Spanish; learning a second language, whether it be Spanish or an Indigenous language; and learning at least one foreign language' (COICA, 2005). In 2005, COICA published the *Agenda Indígena Amazónica* (Amazonian Indigenous Agenda), which provides an overview of key goals: respect for life, health, individual freedom; maintenance of territorial, cultural, spiritual, and social integrity; appropriate integration of ancestral knowledge and western knowledge (Diálogo de Sabers, 2005).

Despite these notable advances in the Amazon and elsewhere in the country, in recent years, Indigenous organisations have been troubled by internal divisions. This division, according to Lourdes Tibán, director of the *Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador* (National Council for the Development of Indigenous and Black Communities of Ecuador) (CODENPE), has impeded collaborative work (personal communication, October 23, 2005).

Education planning and policy (Elementary and Secondary)

Throughout the country, bilingual intercultural education (BIE) continues under the auspices of DINEIB. At present, the Directorate serves 170,111 students in the Amazon region alone, of which only 20.16 per cent attend an educational program that is in fact intercultural and bilingual. In other words, most of these students attend monolingual Spanish schools. According to interviews with Wao and A'i speakers and teachers, the most serious problem is the lack of teachers that speak their languages.

BIE still faces many challenges at the conceptual level as well. Close analysis of practice suggests that most BIE teachers, including those who are themselves Indigenous, continue to use traditional teaching methods (Garcés, 2004). In recent years there has been greater emphasis by both the DINEIB and the CONAIE on the need to rethink education, and to develop a model of education which is truly intercultural, placing all groups on an equal footing (see, e.g., CONAIE, 2004; Haboud, Krainer & Yáñez, 2006).

As an example of an initiative with such an aim, since 1988, the Cofans have developed an educational project, *Fundación para la Sobrevivencia Cofán* (Foundation for Cofan Survival) (FSC), which seeks to provide competitive and quality education for all students and to help them eventually to become qualified professionals with pride in their identity. Cofan youth groups study in renowned schools in major Ecuadorian cities while they live with their own people. The aim is to cultivate a new Cofan generation who will be both locally grounded and, at the same time, professionally equipped to defend their 300,000 hectares of forest land (see www.cofan.org). If this program is successful, it will be a model for those endangered language communities now at the greatest disadvantage.

Higher education policy and planning in the Amazon and beyond

One major shared advance across both Amazonian and Highland regions has been the development of multiple projects to promote Indigenous higher education. Some of the prime examples of these include:

Proyecto Ibis ('Ibis Project'), funded by the Danish government, has supported

two education projects since 2003: (a) a degree in intercultural bilingual education (PLEIB, 2002) offered in Spanish but designed for teachers of small-population Indigenous nationalities. The program operates in modules, each lasting for four years, and has been developed jointly with the *Universidad de Cuenca*, CONAIE, DINEIB and the Canelos Pedagogical Intercultural Bilingual Institute.² The program is now in its second year and serves 300 students; (b) a bi-national project (WASH) that is being developed with the Wambis, the Awajun of Peru and the Shuar people of Ecuador. This program will develop its own educational system grounded in their worldview promoting the maintenance of their language and culture.

La Fundación de Culturas Indígenas Kawsay (The Foundation of Indigenous Cultures Kawsay), formed in 2000, aims to cultivate and train Indigenous leaders. It is planning to convert the program into the *Universidad Intercultural Kawsay* (Intercultural University Kawsay) (Moya & Moya, 2004).

Universidad en Sarayaku – Proyecto Yachay (University in Sarayaku-Yachay Project).³ In 2003 the Quichua community of Sarayaku inaugurated a degree in intercultural bilingual education in an agreement with the *Universidad de Lleida* (University of Lleida) of Spain and Emprentes (from Catalonia). The program lasts for four years and 8 months (Personal communication, Ileana Almeida (linguist and historian) and Ángel Ramírez, DINEIB (October 17 and 26, 2005, respectively).

Universidad Intercultural Amawtay Wasi as part of the *Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas* (Intercultural University of the *Nacionalidades* and Indigenous Peoples). This university promotes itself as a ‘universidad para todos, todos por una universidad intercultural’ (university for everyone, everyone for an intercultural university), basing its curriculum on five learning centres: *Yachay Munay*, *Munay Ruray*, *Ruray Ushay*, *Ushay Yachay*, and *Centro Kawsay*. These centres focus on (respectively) world views, rationalities, philosophies; human beings in the community, the land, the planet, the cosmos; the recuperation and development of human talent with technology; the construction of interculturality; the construction of wisdom (*Amawtaywasi* *Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblo Indígenas*, 2007). This university is closely connected with the country’s Indigenous movement, as one of its sponsors is CONAIE.

DINEIB and ***la Universidad de Cuenca*** currently offer an M.A. degree in teacher training. Graduates will teach in pedagogical schools, technical colleges and specific university programs. This is a two-year, distance-learning program; students are required to attend in person one week per month. The first group of students will graduate in March 2008; the second cohort will be due in October 2008 (Personal communication, Ángel Ramírez, DINEIB, January 22, 2007).

Other advances and developments: Language materials and programs

Indigenous written and audio materials have been developed by a wide variety of individuals and organisation over the last five years. For instance,

Mitos, cuentos y leyendas del pueblo Saraguro (Myths, stories, and legends from the town of Saraguro), is a recent (2006) small-scale publication in Quichua and Spanish designed so that the 'sabiduría de nuestros mayores perdure en la memoria de las nuevas generaciones' (knowledge of our elders remains in the memory of the new generations). A very different example comes from the agreement by several oil companies to contribute to the publication of printed materials, for example, lexicons and oral stories. In 2005, under the title *Palabra Mágica* (Magic Word), Petroecuador produced a compilation of oral stories in two volumes with CDs included. The company, Petrobras, as part of the Plan de Vida (Life Plan) for the Wao population, has accepted a petition from the speakers of Wao to finance the publication of a lexicon (Personal communication, M. Isabel Zea, Petrobras Community Relations, September 30, 2005).

While these materials are an important source of information for those studying cultures, language, and settled communities in the Ecuadorian territory, it does not guarantee the vitality of language nor the survival of its speakers, who have difficulty accessing these readings, rethinking their own histories or listening to their own voices.

To fill this gap, the *Coordinadora de Radios Populares y Educativas del Ecuador* (Coordinator of Popular and Educational Radios of Ecuador) (CORAPE) has been working since 1988 to strengthen educational, popular and community radio systems of Ecuador, grouping radio stations and production centres, directly linking them to social development processes at the national level. Currently, it is working with 35 affiliated distributed radio stations across the country to construct a Quichua network in coordination with local radio stations. Transmission is bilingual, Quichua to Spanish, although hopefully the project will be working with other languages in the Amazon region in 2007.⁴ There are also local initiatives to develop Indigenous language radio programming. For instance, Lauro Vicente Poma Macas, a Quichua speaker from the Saraguro highlands, records and produces a weekly program in Quichua and Spanish. The program, which is designed primarily for school-aged, Spanish-dominant Indigenous children, aims to promote pride and to develop competence in Quichua.

Other recent radio efforts include *Un minuto de multiculturalidad* (Multicultural Moment), a program which seeks to promote and raise awareness about linguistic diversity among *all* Ecuadorians beginning in 2007. Using a quiz show format, listeners will be asked to identify different Ecuadorian Indigenous languages, and then they will hear a short segment from speakers of those languages about those languages.

Lastly, at the level of computer networks, Abya Yala coordinates the Network of Amazonian languages (see <http://www.abayayala.org/Linda>) that seeks to exchange information related to completed investigations concerning Indigenous languages and peoples. The CODENPE, in agreement with the *Servicios de Iniciativa Local para la Amazonía Ecuatoriana* (Local Initiative Services for the Ecuadorian Amazon) (SILAE) maintains computer systems that support the initiatives of Amazonian development (*Infocodenpe*, special bulletin No. 016, October 6, 2005). The *Instituto de Tecnologías del Lenguaje* of Carnegie Mellon (The Technical Institute of Languages), the *Centro de Tecnologías de Información de la Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral* (The Center of Information Technology

of the Polytechnic School of the Coast), the DINEIB and the DIPEIB-Pastaza, initiated a project in 2003 about the Development of Information Technology for BIE, named: 'Avenue/Huaorani – Avenue/Quichua.' Their aim is to develop a computerised translation system from Quichua and Wao to Spanish, as an adjunct of a system of simultaneous translation from Quichua to Wao. The web not only provides lexicons in various languages, grammatical outlines and 'easy lessons' of differing scope in all languages, but also carries, official statistics, mapping, and of course, tourist descriptions of the exotic Amazon.

Conclusion

Little has changed in terms of official, national-level language and education policy in Ecuador since 2002; however, the last five years, has seen greater implementational space for local initiatives that could eventually favor Indigenous and minoritised languages. Although Indigenous peoples of Ecuador face on-going challenges, Indigenous organisations, communities, and individuals continue to seek alternative and creative ways to survive, adapt, and flourish in Ecuador in 2007. And Rafael Correa, the newest Ecuadorian president, publicly announced that his government should be 'para los indios' (for the Indians) in a recent speech in an Indigenous Quichua town, Zumbahua (January 6, 2007). We hope that this is more than political positioning on Correa's part, but will mean that, in the years ahead, Ecuadorian democracy will work towards the dual goals of reducing social inequalities and developing a true multilingual intercultural society.

The official policies and formal language planning activity for this to happen have been in place for approximately a decade. Whether or not this official policy meets its explicitly stated goals and whether Quichua and Indigenous languages can maintain a foothold in the republic depends to great measure *not* on the creation of future additional language policies, but rather on how the local ecology continues to change in relation to massive migration, globalisation and other large-scale forces. This review, and in particular, the developments in the areas of lowland education programming and higher education planning, gives us both cause for concern and cause for (cautious) optimism. Ecuador's Indigenous organisations maintain that the current laws and policies – which they had a major hand in shaping – are well crafted and work to promote respect for their linguistic and cultural rights. From their viewpoint – and from ours – what is still needed is better use of funding and more effective programming that can meet the spirit and aims of these policies. This will require on-going work in education – and perhaps more importantly, beyond education – to promote the use, development and vitality of Ecuadorian languages other than Spanish.

Notes

1. These included *El Consejo Ampliado de los Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador* (The Extended Council of the people of the Quichua Nationality) (ECUARUNARI), *Confederación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana* (Confederation of the Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon) (CONFENIAE), and *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Costa* (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Coast) (CONAICE).
2. We thank Ileana Soto, Ibis Denmark Official, for the information about these projects

- (personal communication, October 13, 2005). One can find a more detailed description at: ibisecu@accessinter.net / ac@ibisur.org
3. See http://www.sarayacu.com/education/proyecto_yachay.rtf
 4. We thank José Atupaña de CORAPE for this information (personal communication, October 29, 2005). It is possible to enter the consulted bilingual programming: www.corape.aler.org.

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Abbreviations

CODENPE	Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador [Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador]
COICA	Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica [Indigenous Organisations of Amazonian Cuenca]
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador [Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador]
CONFENIAE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana [Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon]
CORAPE	Radios Populares y Educativas del Ecuador [Coordinator of Popular and Educational Radios of Ecuador]
DINEIB	Dirección Nacional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe [National Directorate of Intercultural Bilingual Education]
FSC	Fundación para la Sobrevivencia Cofán [Foundation for Cofan Survival]
SILAE	Servicios de Iniciativa Local para la Amazonía Ecuatoriana [Local Initiative Services for the Ecuadorian Amazon]

(Note: Names tend to be in Spanish given that the aim of most of these organisations is to serve multiple indigenous language groups and Spanish is viewed as the *lingua franca*.)