

Bilingualism and Dialectology in Peru

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This paper will attempt to account for a theoretical problem which has still not been solved in a manner which is totally sufficient and remains subject to criticism. We believe, however, that the value of this paper lies in its debatable nature and in its attempt to widen understanding of the areas where Spanish coexists with other American languages (Quechua in particular). We accept this reality as a point of departure, rather than avoiding it. In this analysis the varieties of Spanish used by non-native Spanish speakers and native Quechua speakers are incorporated in the dialectology of Peruvian Spanish. If indeed these speakers are encountered in a distinct degree of Hispanization, their contact with Spanish and the effort and need they have to use it constitute a basic premise of this paper, for even though their productive capacity in certain aspects may be limited by virtue of their exposure to the Spanish to which these speakers are submitted, their passive knowledge of this language soon differentiates them from the monolingual speakers not only of the vernacular language but also of Spanish.

In a research project begun in 1973 dealing with the Spanish dialect zones in Peru, we attempted to identify the different social varieties of Spanish usage in Lima and other cities of high demographic density.¹ In the task of data collection, we frequently encountered informants from the popular urban strata, especially the suburban, whose second language was Spanish. Immediately, it could be perceived that these bilinguals were undergoing a different degree of Hispanization and also that their presence in a sample taken of the population of Lima was not a fact constituted by chance. In effect, Lima, the capital of Peru, located within the coastal region, has experienced a staggering growth in the last thirty years, and the 1972 census figures reveal that at the present time nearly two-thirds of its population is made up of migrants from the Andean zone. The Andean inhabitant who has migrated to the coastal valleys and in particular to Lima, Chimbote, Tacna, and Arequipa, has left behind his mountain home in search of better work opportunities and