

# Ecuadorian Spanish in the 21st Century

“The linguistic situation of Ecuador clearly shows that the Ecuadorian Spanish and the Kichwa of the region, including their respective varieties, can only be understood through coexistence. The linguistic reality of large Spanish-speaking territories is not conveniently explained either by the majority use of Spanish or by the resilient use of a native language, but by the secular and close contact between one and the other, and by the effects that such contact has produced. Pieter Muysken, honored in this volume, would be very proud to see his name at the head of this splendid collection of works on Ecuadorian Spanish in the 21st century.”

—Francisco Moreno-Fernández

Alexander von Humboldt Professor, Universität Heidelberg,  
Germany

# Ecuadorian Spanish in the 21st Century:

*Historical and Contemporary  
Perspectives*

Edited by

Rosario Gómez, Erin O'Rourke  
and Christina García

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



Ecuadorian Spanish in the 21st Century:  
Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

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This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-8680-4

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8680-2

In Memoriam Pieter Muysken

(1950 – 2021)



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# IN MEMORIAM PIETER MUYSKEN

(1950 – 2021)

El nombre de Pieter Muysken resuena en el mundo de las lenguas indígenas sudamericanas como uno de sus mayores estudiosos y promotores. Dedicado a revelar sus particularidades estructurales como a preservar su riqueza léxica, Pieter nos enseñó que el pasado y el presente de las lenguas indígenas en los Andes no pueden comprenderse por fuera de una larga historia de contactos. Sus primeras investigaciones en la Sierra ecuatoriana arrancaron a mediados de 1974 y se extendieron hasta agosto de 1976, para materializarse en una disertación doctoral sobre los cambios ocurridos a nivel de la sintaxis de la frase verbal en el kichwa ecuatoriano (1977). Gracias a su prolongada estadía en Ecuador, Pieter llegó a conocer en profundidad la gran variación al interior del quichua, así como las particularidades históricas de su formación, su interrelación con el castellano hablado en la sierra ecuatoriana, y, por último, mas no por ello menos importante, los efectos léxicos y gramaticales de dicha interrelación en ambas lenguas.

De este modo quedaron trazados con claridad los tres itinerarios que Pieter recorrió a lo largo de su prolífica carrera en lo que tiene que ver con el Ecuador. El primero de ellos consistió en rastrear la formación del kichwa ecuatoriano mediante un análisis sincrónico de los dialectos contemporáneos y un estudio comparativo de gramáticas coloniales y republicanas tempranas. El hallazgo más importante de su pesquisa consiste en la comprensión del kichwa ecuatoriano como una koiné formada a partir de un grupo de variedades quechuas sureñas llegadas a los Andes septentrionales como resultado de la ocupación inca. El segundo itinerario lo llevaría al descubrimiento, para la lingüística, de una variedad cuya estructura gramatical es kichwa y cuyo léxico es predominantemente castellano, con lo cual se ubica en la mitad de un *continuum* que describe la variedad lingüística y la complejidad sociolingüística de la Sierra ecuatoriana. Conocida como “media lengua” desde su primera publicación sobre el tema (1979), el conocimiento de la composición bipartita de esta variedad única en el mundo andino motivó la descripción de nuevas variedades de composición similar en contextos bilingües, que desde

entonces se han tipificado como “lenguas mixtas.” El tercero y último de los itinerarios recorridos, la formación de la variedad que hoy se conoce como “castellano andino ecuatoriano,” complementa de varias maneras los dos anteriores. Junto con el estudio de las particularidades sintácticas del kichwa de Cotopaxi, Pieter describió la media lengua hablada en la zona de Salcedo (Cotopaxi), donde recogió además un extenso corpus de castellano andino que ha sido digitalizado con fines de investigación.

Su exploración en los orígenes del castellano andino en el Ecuador llamó nuestra atención sobre los fenómenos de convergencia que se producen a nivel fonético entre este y el kichwa serrano como producto de su contacto centenario, pero además iluminó el mecanismo que produjo la variedad serrana del castellano ecuatoriano: su aprendizaje como segunda lengua por parte de hablantes de kichwa en un contexto sociolingüísticamente complejo. Estos tres itinerarios recorridos constituyen el enorme aporte de Pieter Muysken a la comprensión de la riqueza lingüística del Ecuador y trazan los derroteros que han orientado y siguen orientando numerosas indagaciones, como lo demuestran los capítulos que componen este libro que dedicamos a su memoria.



The name of Pieter Muysken resonates in the world of South American indigenous languages as one of its greatest scholars and promoters. Dedicated to revealing their structural peculiarities as well as preserving their lexical richness, Pieter taught us that the past and present of indigenous languages in the Andes cannot be understood outside of a long history of contact. His first investigations in the Ecuadorian Sierra began in mid-1974 and continued until August 1976, which culminated in a doctoral dissertation on the changes that occurred at the level of the syntax of the verb phrase in Ecuadorian Kichwa (1977). As a result of his long stay in Ecuador, Pieter acquired a deep understanding of the great variation within Kichwa, as well as the historical particularities of its development, its interrelation with the Spanish spoken in the Ecuadorian Sierra, and, last but not least, the lexical and grammatical effects of said interrelation in both languages.

Thus, the three trajectories that Pieter followed throughout his prolific career related to Ecuador were clearly defined. The first of these consisted in tracing the development of Ecuadorian Kichwa through a synchronic analysis of contemporary dialects and a comparative study of colonial and early republican grammars. The most important finding of his research consists in the understanding of Ecuadorian Kichwa as a *koiné* formed from a group of southern Quechua varieties that arrived in the northern Andes as a consequence of the Inca occupation. The second itinerary would lead him to the discovery—for linguistics—of “Media Lengua”, a variety whose grammatical structure is Kichwa and whose lexicon is predominantly Spanish. Media Lengua is located in the middle of a continuum that describes the linguistic variety and the sociolinguistic complexity of the Ecuadorian Sierra. Since his first publication on the subject (1979), knowledge of the bipartite composition of this unique variety in the Andean world led to the description of new varieties of similar structures in bilingual contexts, which have since been classified as “mixed languages.” The third and last of the itineraries covered, the development of the variety that today is known as “Ecuadorian Andean Spanish,” complements the previous two in various ways. Together with the study of the syntactic particularities of Cotopaxi Kichwa, Pieter described the Media Lengua spoken in the Salcedo area (Cotopaxi), where he also collected an extensive corpus of Andean Spanish that has been digitized for research purposes.

His exploration of the origins of Andean Spanish in Ecuador drew our attention to the convergence phenomena that occur at the phonetic level between it and Serrano Kichwa, as a product of their centuries-long contact, and it also highlighted the mechanism that produced the Serrano variety of Ecuadorian Spanish: its learning as a second language by Kichwa speakers in a sociolinguistically complex context. These three itineraries covered constitute Pieter Muysken’s enormous contribution to the understanding of the linguistic richness of Ecuador and trace the paths that have guided and continue to guide numerous inquiries, as evidenced by the chapters that make up this book which we dedicate to his memory.

Jorge Gómez Rendón  
Quito, 2021



## INTRODUCTION

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### **Context and History of the Study of Ecuadorian Spanish**

Ecuador is one of the smallest countries in Latin America with a population of 17,289,554 (2022 World Factbook) and yet still boasts a rich diversity of languages (and cultures). According to Ethnologue, there are 24 languages in Ecuador, of which 23 are living, and 1 is extinct (Lewis et al. 2015). Of the 24 living languages, 21 are indigenous (however, this number counts the different dialects of Kichwa as separate languages) and 3 are non-indigenous. According to Haboud (2019), there are 14 nationalities, and there are 13 active Amerindian languages today. Ethnically, Ecuador's population is comprised of Amerindian (7%), Afro-Ecuadorians (7.2%), mestizos (71.9%), and a small sector who self-identify as white Hispanics (6.1%). The Amerindian nations like the Awá, Chachi, Tsá'chila and Épera live in the Coast. The Andean Kichwa nation is the largest and is spread throughout the Andes, with a growing migration of Kichwa speakers to Guayaquil from Chimborazo (Luis Tuaza, personal communication 2018); the A'Í Cofan, Secoya, Siona, Huaorani, Shuar, Achuar, Shiwiar, Zapara (whose language no longer has fluent speakers), and Amazonian Kichwa Nations are spread through Amazonia, each speaking their own language (Haboud 2004, *Oralidad Modernidad*). These brief statistics illustrate the multiethnic and plurilingual landscape in which the Ecuadorian speech communities live.

In spite of the numerous languages present in Ecuador, Kichwa—and its subdialects—(historically itself an imposed language on other indigenous nations) is the language with the largest number of speakers, and the language that has been studied the most in contexts of language contact with Spanish. However, Kichwa, as well as all other Amerindian languages in the Coast and Amazonia are severely threatened as speakers shift to Spanish, with a tendency towards Spanish monolingualism as it facilitates access to mainstream society and its perceived socioeconomic advantages. For instance, the long-term contact situation of Spanish and Amerindian languages has produced mutual borrowings and influence. Kichwa in the Andes, A'ingae in Amazonia, and T'safiki near the Coast have borrowed not only lexical items from Spanish, which is the most common form of borrowings, but also semantic and morphosyntactic elements like prepositions or plural endings, and person suffixes (Haboud 2004). This is often indicative of an accelerated language loss and shift towards the dominant language.

The multilingual and multidialectal nature of Ecuador makes it an ideal place for linguistic studies of all kinds. The research on Ecuadorian Spanish began in the mid-twentieth century when pioneers such as Canfield (1962) and Boyd-Bowman (1953) set out to document the pronunciation of the Americas. Around this same time, Toscano Mateus (1953) published the first—and to date the only—book to truly provide a comprehensive look at Ecuadorian Spanish: *El español en el Ecuador*. This work became the main reference for studies on Ecuadorian Spanish as it includes information about the lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic features of the sub-dialects of this variety. Since this seminal work, there have been sporadic studies of Ecuadorian Spanish, notably Haboud's (1998) book carefully examining the prolonged contact between Kichwa and Spanish in the Ecuadorian Highlands. However, it was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century that studies on this variety began to emerge more frequently, including studies that apply the variationist framework and modern data analysis techniques to the study of Ecuadorian Spanish. As described below, we offer this volume as a step in this direction, by bringing together several recent studies on Ecuadorian Spanish.

Geographically speaking, Ecuador is broken up into four major regions (Coast, Highlands, Amazon, and the Galapagos Islands), which to some extent mirrors the linguistic landscape. Toscano Mateus (1953), Boyd-Bowman (1953), Lipski (1994), and Gómez (2022<sup>1</sup>) agree that there are three major dialect regions in Ecuador: Coast, Highlands, and Amazon. The

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<sup>1</sup> See Gómez (2022) for a much more detailed summary of dialectal features.

vast majority of studies on Ecuadorian Spanish focus on the Highland dialect, although there are general descriptions of Coastal Ecuadorian Spanish (Lipski 1996, Moreno Fernández 2020), and systematic studies of Amazonian Ecuadorian Spanish are beginning to emerge (O'Rourke 2020, and this volume). The more recent studies in the Amazonian region call into question Lipski's (1994) claim that a true Amazonian Ecuadorian dialect has yet to emerge since most of the population, at the time of his writing, were transplants.

Although Highland Ecuadorian Spanish, often referred to as *castellano andino ecuatoriano* (CAE) in Spanish, is imagined and referenced as a sub-dialect of Ecuadorian Spanish, most scholars concur that further subdivision within this sub-dialect is warranted. For instance, Lipski (1994, 248-49) denotes four smaller dialect regions within the highlands: Carchi (extreme north), Central Highlands (from Imbabura to Chimborazo), Central South (Cañar/Azuay), and Loja (extreme south). While there are similarities between these smaller dialects within Highland Ecuadorian Spanish, differences can be found in both phonological and morphosyntactic features, many times in relationship to the varying influence of Kichwa throughout the highlands. Gómez (2003) affirms that the delateralization of /k/ and assibilation of /t/ constitute isoglosses within the highlands, with preservation of the palatal lateral being characteristic of Loja and the Central South (although, see Cole, this volume), and assibilation of /t/ being present in all highland dialects except Loja in the south and Carchi in the north.

Most of the linguistic studies on Ecuadorian Spanish center around the influence of Kichwa, which is not surprising, as Kichwa speakers are the largest indigenous group. The contact situation between Spanish and Kichwa has been so intense that it is evident in Ecuadorian Spanish at all levels of linguistic analysis (Haboud and de la Vega 2008; Muysken 2018; Gómez Rendón, this volume). Kichwa, with its own regional varieties, has given rise to Andean bilingualism (Lipski 2012) and has produced different outcomes depending on the type of contact, colonization, migrations, and processes of globalization (Gómez Rendón, this volume). On the other hand, the Spanish spoken on the Coast is heavily influenced by African linguistic traits (Sessarego and King 2018), but many more studies are needed in this area.

In the area of phonetics and phonology, there is a merging of features of the Spanish spoken by the settlers during the colonial period and that of Kichwa. This is evident in the deletion or weakening of central vowels /e/ and /o/ as well as the weakening of unstressed vowels (Toscano Mateus 1953; Haboud and de la Vega 2008; Carvajal, this volume). The phenomenon has been attributed to the unstable status of unstressed vowels

in Old Spanish and the fact that Kichwa has only 3 vowel phonemes in its inventory: /i/, /u/ and /a/. In the consonant system of Andean Spanish, there is assibilation of /r/ and /ʎ/ (Gómez 2003, 2013, and this volume; Cole, this volume). Some scholars believe that the assibilation of /r/ is possibly a result of Spanish influence on Kichwa—since it has also been attested in some Peninsular Spanish varieties (Toscano Mateus 1953)—which in turn, has influenced Spanish in the Andes. The realization of /r/ is perhaps the most variable not only in the Andes (see Lipski 2021), but also in the Coast; however, there are few (if any) studies that examine the behavior of rhotics in Coastal and Amazonian Ecuadorian Spanish. The realization of labiodental /f/ as [ɸ], a bilabial fricative, has also been attributed to Kichwa contact, as this articulation is present in Imbabura Kichwa. Other prominent features include the voicing of intervocalic /s/ to varying degrees throughout the highlands (Robinson 1979; Lipski 1989, 2021; Chappell 2011; Strycharczuk et al. 2014; Davidson 2019; García 2020), as well as the placement of secondary stress in polysyllabic words (O'Rourke, this volume).

In the realm of morphology and syntax, some salient features include the use of a reduced form of *pues* 'but' giving rise to a /f/ as a discourse marker and has been attributed in some way to Kichwa influence (Guerra & Bradley, this volume; Jesberger 2018, Haboud 2022b). According to Palacios (2005a) the simplification of the direct and indirect object system in favor of *le*, unmarked for gender or number is very typical of Andean Spanish, which could be attributed to Kichwa influence (Narváez, this volume). Other features include the use of second person singular *vos* instead of *tú* (a pragmatic function often used to address a person of lower status), and the use of the gerund in verbs to indicate anteriority where standard Spanish would use a present perfect construction (*vengo comiendo* vs. *he comido antes de salir*, meaning 'I ate before I left'). This feature, too, has found an explanation in the morphosyntactic structure of Kichwa. The atemporal use of the present perfect versus the preterit, where the present perfect acquires a semantic value of evidentiality (Haboud and de la Vega 2008; Puma 2018), the use of the future tense instead of command forms, the use of the verb *dar* 'to give' + verb as a way to soften a command (Haboud and Palacios 2017; Guerra 2020; García 2021), and the innovative use of *saber* 'to know' + infinitive (Enríquez 2018) have all found similarities in Kichwa constructions. All of the features described above need to be tested in other varieties of Spanish. Finally, in the lexicon, the Kichwa influence is more evident and abundant, and also possibly the easiest to identify (Haboud 1998; Gómez Rendón, this volume; Estrella

Santos, this volume), especially in the form of toponyms, zoonyms, and phytonyms (Zúñiga 2019).

Despite the advances in this field, particularly in the past twenty years, there is still much to study regarding processes of linguistic structural change at all levels of grammar resulting from the diverse communicative needs of speakers, the political and economic changes, new immigration and retromigration patterns, linguistic and racial discrimination, as well as all other processes of globalization and localization (Haboud 2022a). There is also comparatively less research on Ecuadorian Spanish than other Latin American varieties, such as Colombian, Mexican, and Argentine Spanish. This fact was the motivation for organizing the first ever Symposium on Ecuadorian Spanish, which was held at the University of Guelph in Guelph, Canada on June 2-3, 2018. This symposium convened scholars from Canada, Ecuador, Europe, and the United States to share research concerning all aspects of Ecuadorian Spanish. The present volume represents a selection of the papers presented at this symposium.

## **Features and Contributions of the Volume**

The volume is organized in three thematic sections, each section building on the subsequent one. The first section, Geographic and Historical Factors, includes three chapters (1-3) that lay the groundwork for understanding how Ecuadorian Spanish has formed, the nature of the contact between Spanish and Kichwa, as well as other indigenous languages, and the sociopolitical and demographic factors that have influenced both of these developments. In the next section, Phonetics and Phonology, Chapters 4-9 detail phonetic phenomena unique to Ecuadorian Spanish, utilizing cutting-edge techniques in acoustic and phonological analysis. Finally, in the last section, Morphology and Syntax, Chapter 10 presents an analysis of morphosyntactic variation concerning the pronominal system.

The Geographic and Historical Factors section begins with Pieter Muysken's chapter, which presents a concise yet panoramic view of the sociocultural context in which Spanish and Kichwa developed within Ecuador, which also resulted in the emergence of Media Lengua varieties. The chapter first provides a series of depictions of the linguistic landscape from the 15th to the 20th century in section 2. Then specific examples of the development of Kichwa, Spanish, and Media Lengua in section 3 are examined. In particular, excerpts drawn from a Salcedo corpus are presented and examined for features related to Kichwa, transfer, and L2 acquisition. Section 3 ends with discussion of intermediate varieties between Kichwa and Andean Spanish, that is, Media Lengua. The chapter concludes with a

presentation of a linguistic continuum with “more Kichwa” and “more Spanish” on either end and several forms and varieties in between.

Continuing along these lines, the next chapter, by Jorge Gómez Rendón, considers the effect of two converging processes on the emergence of Ecuadorian Spanish: the transmission of the Spanish language by the Spanish conquerors to their Creole descendants and the Hispanicization of native groups. This chapter traces the development of these two processes from the pre-Columbian era through the conquest, focusing on the social and linguistic results of demographic shifts. This careful examination of sociohistorical factors leads to the conclusion that the emergence of Ecuadorian Spanish was very different between the Lowlands (Coast), where speakers of African descent and Barbacoan languages had a greater influence, and the Highlands, where both the large native population and the early presence of the Spanish population had a significant impact.

Rounding out the first section, Chapter 3, by Ana Estrella Santos, describes the origins of the *Atlas Lingüístico del Ecuador* (ALEcu) and some of the results of this project, focusing on lexical aspects. The ALEcu formally began under the direction of Antonio Quilis and Celia Casado-Fresnillo, joining the efforts of atlas projects in most other Latin American countries. Since Quilis’ death in 2003, this project has been taken on by researchers at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador (PUCE), who continue to advance it today. This chapter details the questionnaire used to collect data, the survey sites and how surveys were conducted, some of the challenges that have been encountered along the way, and the current status of ALEcu.

The section on Phonetics and Phonology begins with Molly Cole’s chapter (Chapter 4), which focuses on palatal variations in two speech communities: the monolingual community of Cuenca and the bilingual community of Cañar. The data presented include tokens of orthographic <ll> and <y> from sociolinguistic interviews that were acoustically analyzed. While the results reveal a range of allophones used, the distribution demonstrates a tendency for speakers to favor the voiced palatal approximant for both graphemes, suggesting that the palatal lateral approximant exists to varying degrees in each community. This chapter also explores how factors such as age, bilingualism, and phonetic context affect allophony.

The next chapter in this section (Chapter 5), by Leonardo Carvajal, explores vocalic variation in Kichwa-Spanish bilingual speakers from the Ecuadorian Central Andes. As mentioned previously, there is significant variation in vowel production in Ecuadorian Spanish given that Kichwa only has 3 vowel phonemes. In this study, the vowel production of these

bilingual speakers was acoustically analyzed and compared to that of monolinguals from the same region. The results of this analysis do show a difference between monolingual and bilingual speakers, by which bilinguals produce frontier vowels, have a smaller vowel space, and produce mid vowels that are more dispersed.

In Chapter 6, Erin O'Rourke provides one of the few analyses of Amazonian Ecuadorian Spanish, looking at the role of pitch in syllables preceding the primary stressed syllable, with the goal of investigating whether there is acoustic evidence for secondary stress. The data come from two male and two female Kichwa-Spanish bilinguals, recorded in a reading task that contained words with between one and four pretonic syllables. Four stress patterns were identified as showing secondary stress in the data analyzed and these were examined at the level of the prosodic word and compared to Kichwa stress patterns. The results show how secondary stress, a stylistically emphatic feature already present in Spanish, is utilized by bilinguals to mark word boundaries.

Returning to segmental variation, Chapter 7, by Christina García, presents a broad overview of intervocalic /s/ voicing in Lojano Spanish. This chapter reports on the acoustic analysis of 31 recordings of native Lojanos in two tasks, a sociolinguistic interview, and a reading task. In total, 2,969 tokens of /s/ were measured for percent voicing and the effect of linguistic and social factors on voicing was examined. The results show that /s/ voicing in Lojano Spanish is a gradient, variable process, which differs from other varieties of Highland Ecuadorian Spanish, in which it is more of a categorical process. Showing that there is preliminary evidence of a sound change, García concludes that this has come about in this variety due to both the phonetic force of coarticulation and the social force of contact between Lojano Spanish and neighboring varieties.

Chapter 8, by Rosario Gómez, re-examines the various realizations of the rhotic phonemes including the assibilated variants and their distribution across the speech community in Quito. Early accounts of this phenomenon established that, although stigmatized, the assibilated forms were a stable marker of Andean Spanish, and its use would remain widespread. Further sociolinguistic research with young speakers revealed that the rhotic allophones were socially stratified, and the assibilated forms were declining in the speech of certain speakers, while they were maintained in others. This was an indication that there was a change in progress. Building on the findings described above, Gómez conducted an attitudinal study to further explain such variation. The attitudinal tests revealed that the assibilated variants were not only highly stigmatized, but speakers associated them with Kichwa influence, rurality, and lack of education, among other factors.

Closing out the Phonetics and Phonology section, Chapter 9, by Kathleen Guerra and Travis Bradley, bridges the gap between the second and third sections as it concerns a morphophonological feature: *sifeísmo* in Quito Spanish. Found to be an emphatic form resulting from the devoicing of *pues* "then", it is commonly found in simple responses (e.g., *sif* "yes" and *nof* "no"). Guerra and Travis offer an Optimality Theory approach to analyzing this phenomenon which includes moraic phonology, along with consideration of gestural coordination via Articulatory Phonology, in order to explain the preference for observed forms in this dialect.

As the lone chapter in section three on Morphosyntax, Chapter 10, by Daniela Narváez, details the use of null direct objects in two varieties of Ecuadorian Spanish: Quiteño and Cuencano. Drawing on a corpus of comments collected on Facebook from 120 participants, samples from Quito and Cuenca commenters were analyzed according to linguistic and social variables. Of these, the semantic variable of 'animacy' was found to most constrain pronominal elision in both dialects, while gender of the referent was also relevant in Quito, along with the social variable of gender of the commenter.

## Future Directions

In this volume we have presented ten chapters on linguistic research related to Ecuadorian Spanish. Although relatively smaller in size (compared to research in other Spanish-speaking countries), we believe Ecuador has much to offer to the linguistic community, in both uncovering that which is unique to Ecuador as well as observing that which is universal (or shared across dialects). We hope this volume creates interest in further linguistic pursuits to learn more about the development and variation of the Spanish language in Ecuador. We offer this volume to highlight the richness and diversity of Ecuador and to continue to characterize the Spanish spoken in Ecuador (both by bilinguals and monolinguals), as it represents just one of many languages found within its borders. The special dedication to Pieter Muysken both acknowledges his substantial body of work, which has furthered our knowledge about languages in contact and linguistics in general, and provides the platform (via his chapter within the volume) to recognize the complex linguistic situation in Ecuador. In doing so, we hope this volume may serve as a point of departure to continue forward. We are grateful to Pieter for his contribution as well as to the many other contributors. We look forward to seeing more research on Ecuadorian Spanish and hope this work, and others like it, will serve as a resource for

those investigating the connections between the languages, people(s), and cultures of Ecuador.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge and thank the many people and parties that have contributed to this volume. This collection would not have been possible without the bringing together of scholars at the first ever Symposium on Ecuadorian Spanish. For financial and administrative support of the symposium, we thank The University of Guelph, more specifically the University's Office of Research, College of Arts, and School of Languages and Literatures. We greatly appreciate the tireless efforts of the symposium organizers and assistants: Rosario Gómez, Jorge Gómez Rendón, Rocío Villagrán, and Victoria Ong. This symposium was a one-of-a-kind opportunity to convene and collaborate and we are grateful to all those who presented and participated for creating a space in which we could embark on this project. Finally, we would like to thank Rute de Sousa for her editorial assistance, and Adam Rummens, Jamie George, Amanda Millar, Mhairi Nicol, Finley Haunch, as well as the many talented people from Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their help during the publication process.



**PART 1.**  
**GEOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL FACTORS**



# CHAPTER 1

## SYMBIOTIC CO-CREATION: KICHWA, SPANISH, AND MEDIA LENGUA IN ECUADOR

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### **Abstract**

This chapter sketches the complex interactions between Kichwa and Spanish in Ecuador throughout their history which has resulted in the creation of not only unique linguistic features in both Kichwa and Spanish, but also has given rise to the emergence of a hybrid variety, Media Lengua. Using both historical sources and fieldwork data carried out by the author since 1974, the chapter details some of the processes involved in language contact situations—such as lexical and morphological borrowing, semantic calquing, phonetic convergence, syntactic and semantic interference, relexification, simplification—with the historical processes that formed the backdrop of contact—early invasion and subjugation, consolidation of the Colonial society, emergence of a local elite in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Republican reforms, and 20<sup>th</sup> century urbanization. The varieties discussed are situated along a continuum from Kichwa monolingualism, to Media Lengua, to Spanish, which will continue to evolve alongside future sociohistorical developments.

### **Resumen**

Este capítulo esboza las complejas interacciones entre el kichwa y el español en Ecuador a lo largo de su historia, lo que han dado lugar no solo a la creación de rasgos lingüísticos únicos tanto en el kichwa como en el español, sino que también han dado lugar a la formación de una variedad híbrida, la media lengua. Utilizando tanto fuentes históricas como datos de trabajo de campo realizados por el autor desde 1974, el capítulo detalla algunos de los procesos implicados en las situaciones de contacto lingüístico—como el

préstamo léxico y morfológico, el calco semántico, la convergencia fonética, la interferencia sintáctica y semántica, la relexificación, la simplificación— con los procesos históricos que constituyeron el telón de fondo del contacto—invasión y sometimiento tempranos, consolidación de la sociedad colonial, surgimiento de una élite local en el siglo XVIII, reformas republicanas y urbanización del siglo XX. Las variedades analizadas se sitúan en un continuo que va desde el monolingüismo kichwa, pasando por la media lengua, hasta el español, que seguirán evolucionando con los futuros sucesos sociohistóricos.

## 1. Introduction

This chapter discusses Kichwa, Spanish, and Media Lengua in Ecuador from the perspective of symbiotic co-creation: emergence of language varieties under mutual dependency. The shape and distribution of the three languages discussed can only be seen from the perspective of their mutual dependence, hence the term ‘symbiotic co-creation’.

Kichwa is the now generally adopted name of the Ecuadorian variety of Quechua. Quechua should be thought of not as a single language but as a language family, similar in time depth and internal differentiation to the Romance language family. Different branches of Quechua may or may not be mutually intelligible, in the same way as varieties of Romance. Kichwa, Colombian Inga, and Peruvian Southern Pastaza Quechua are the outliers of the family, structurally most distinct from other branches (see for example, Van de Kerke and Muysken 2014).

I will adopt a perspective based on three assumptions:

- There is an important temporal or historical dimension, in our case covering the period from 1480 to 2020. I will illustrate this dimension with some snapshots for specific time periods.
- The different components of the cognitive and semiotic systems of the different languages play distinctive roles. Words, sounds, affixes, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics all show different behaviors in the contact situation.
- There was a very clear power asymmetry from the very beginning, with clear associated contact scenarios (Thomason and Kaufman 1988). Spanish has been primarily influenced through a shift to that language as a second language by many Kichwa speakers. Kichwa has been primarily influenced by Spanish being maintained as a first language with speakers also knowing Spanish as a dominant second language.

In section 2, I will present a series of snapshots over time of the Ecuadorian highlands, and in section 3 outline some key findings of the work on Kichwa, Spanish, and Media Lengua. Section 4 provides a brief summary and conclusion.

A schematic representation of the three key perspectives informing this paper is shown in figure 1-1.

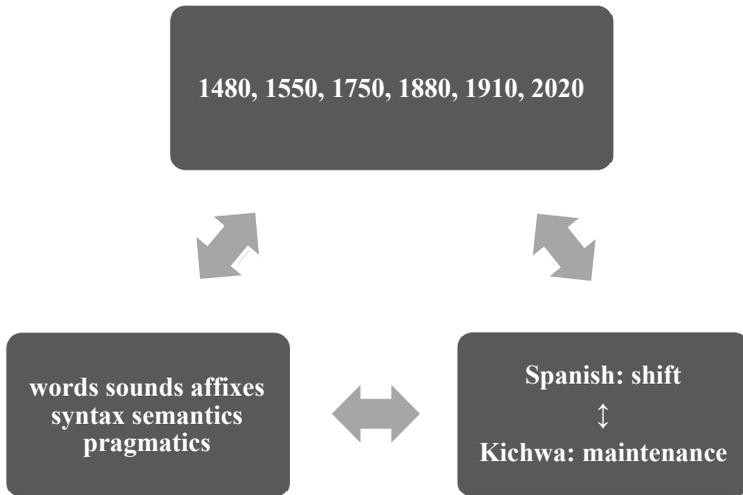


Fig. 1-1. The three key perspectives informing the analysis of co-creation

It is important to remember that the relationship between the two languages is asymmetrical in several ways. First of all, different aspects of the two languages were affected, as can be expected in situations where there was a maintenance scenario for Kichwa coupled with a shift scenario for Spanish. Second, all Kichwa varieties were affected by the new multilingual context,<sup>1</sup> while arguably only some Spanish varieties were directly affected by Kichwa, notably those in the highlands.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that all Kichwa varieties were affected by Spanish to the same degree. Highland varieties show a stronger influence from Spanish, for instance, than Amazonian varieties.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, Kichwa may have influenced Spanish varieties outside the Kichwa speaking sphere indirectly.

## 2. A Series of Snapshots over Time

### 2.1. Introduction

I will begin with a few snapshots of key moments in the history of Ecuador, starting with the arrival of the Incas around 1480, the date of birth of Ecuadorian Kichwa (see also Muysken 1977; 2019).

### 2.2. 1480

In 1450 there was no Ecuador, but rather there was a loose confederative network of largely autonomous chiefdoms, linked by exchange and trade. The people in these chiefdoms spoke different languages, although in the highlands many of their languages may have been related, possibly Barbacoan. There was no Kichwa, and no Spanish. Around 1480, the Incas invaded the territory and started waging battles with some groups, while allying themselves with others. Cuenca was established as a major Inca city, on the foundations of an earlier Cañar polity, and then Quito was conquered. The Inca road went up north, linking a series of urban centers, including Riobamba, Ambato, and Latacunga, and ultimately Quito and Otavalo, to the rest of the Inca empire further south. Their conquest was interrupted when they had reached the Colombian border. While the countryside remained Barbacoan speaking, Quechuan varieties were introduced into the cities as a language of trade and of the local elites which allied themselves with the Incas.

### 2.3. The Spanish Conquest

While the Inca expansion was responsible for the spread of Quechua (Q) to Ecuador,<sup>3</sup> it is the Spanish colonization that led to its consolidation as the language of the *runa* caste.

Several factors were responsible for the emergence of Kichwa as the new language. First of all, population decline weakened the existing ethnic communities and their languages, which led to ethnic restructuring. Consider table 1-1:

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<sup>3</sup> Several Q varieties may have been brought to Ecuador:

- Varieties of the Inca armies, which were recruited in different parts of the Andes;
- Varieties of the Inca court from Cuzco;
- Trader varieties, which may have been specifically from northern Peru; and
- Varieties of the *mitimae*, groups relocated by the Incas from other parts of the empire.

**Table 1-1. Population of Ecuador before the Spanish invasion and at the end of the 16th century, in thousands of people.**

	<b>Pre- Conquest</b>	<b>End of the 16th Century</b>	<b>% of Loss</b>
<i>Sierra</i>	838.6	164.5	80.4
<i>Costa</i>	546-572	26.5	95.3
<i>Amazonía Selva Alta</i>	98	26.2	73.3
<i>Amazonía Selva Baja</i>	132-152	36.1-44.5*	71.7

\*From the end of the 17th century

Source: Data from Newson (1995, 341, 350).

There was also considerable movement of workforce to serve the needs of the new colonial economy.

Kichwa provided a welcome channel of communication within this new economy, as is sketched in figure 1-2.

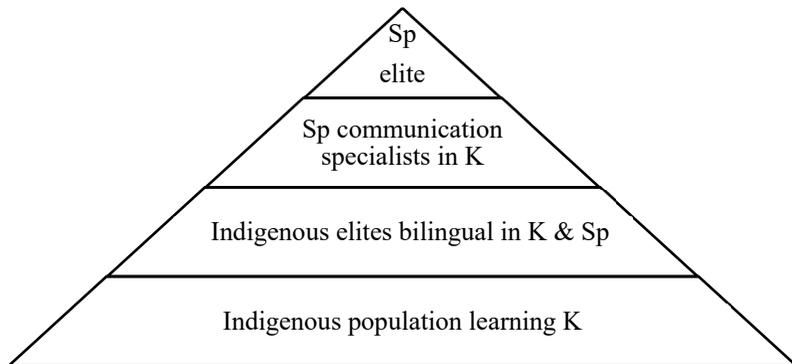


Fig. 1-2. Kichwa as a channel of communication in the early Colony  
(Sp = Spanish, K = Kichwa)

The Spanish communication specialists were the clergy, primarily. They were educating the local elite children and started parishes with indigenous converts.

The Spanish chronicler Cieza de León underlines the value of Kichwa as a communicative language for the Spanish in (1), writing around 1550 (Cieza de León, *Señorio*, (1553) 1967, XXIV):

(1)

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Y con tanto, digo que fue mucho beneficio para los españoles haber esta lengua, pues podían andar por todas partes, en algunas de las cuales ya se va perdiendo ...

... and with this, I say there was much benefit for the Spanish having this language, because they could travel through all parts, and in some of them it is already getting lost ...

---

Y entendido por ellos cuán gran trabajo sería caminar por tierra tan larga y a donde a cada legua y a cada paso había nueva lengua, y que sería gran dificultad el entender a todos por intérpretes, escogiendo lo más seguro ordenaron y mandaron, so graves penas que pusieron, que todos los naturales de su imperio entendiesen y supesen la lengua del Cuzco generalmente, así ellos como sus mujeres de tal manera que aún la criatura no hobiese dejado el pecho de su madre cuando lo comenzasen a mostrar la lengua que había de saber ...

And it being understood by them how much work it would be to walk through such a large area and at every step there was a new language, and it would be a great difficulty to understand through all the interpreters, and choosing the most secure one they ordered and commanded, under serious punishments that they put out, that all the inhabitants of their empire understood and knew the language of Cuzco generally, thus they like their wives so that the child would not have left his mother's breast when they started showing them the language that they had to know ...

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... y tan de veras se entendió en ello que en el tiempo de pocos años se sabía y se usaba una lengua en más de mil doscientas leguas; y aunque esta lengua se usaba todos hablaban las suyas, que eran tantas que aunque lo escribiese no lo creerían.

... and it stretched out over it so definitively that in the span of a few years a language was known and used in more than a twelve hundred leagues; and although this language was used also everyone spoke their own [languages], of which there were so many that even if one writes it down one would not be believed.

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Cieza de León at the same time was well aware of the distinct ethnic groups, their languages, and their mutual relations, as is evident in (2) from various quotes (Cieza de León, *Crónica*, (1553) 1967, 392):