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STRATIFICATIONS REFLECTED IN TRUCK

BUMPER SLOGANS IN PERU¹

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Since the days of the Incas roads in the highlands and throughout Peru have been a vital means of disseminating ideas from the centers of culture to the more isolated, less integrated parts of the population. As supplies are transferred from one area to another, the people engaged in transportation are the emissaries of cultural change.

As more roadways are built, an increasing number of people are given the opportunity for geographic mobility. With this mobility there is an awakening of new interests and possibilities.

For the past thirty or forty years Peru has had an active program of road-building which has lessened the isolation of the highlands from the coastal regions. Even though there are still many large haciendas and Indian communities which lack roads which connect them to the larger cities, even these have access to market towns which are located on some type of road which allows vehicular traffic at least during the dry season. By 1960 it was possible to travel by car and truck to most mestizo towns and villages of the highlands at least part of the year.²

Peruvian drivers of inter-provincial trucks, and, less frequently, buses have a custom of either naming their vehicles or painting slogans on them. The name or slogan is generally lettered on one of the bumpers or on the cab above the windshield.

In 1957 and again in 1960 the Peruvian linguist, J.M.B. Farfan, published lists of the names and slogans³ which he had noted over a period of years. In publishing the lists Farfan suggested that they might be a thermometer of a town, might mark an epoch, a story, or a situation. In cataloguing the lists he has used twenty-three rough categories into which the slogans fit more or less loosely according to their denotative meanings.

Any brief perusal of the lists, especially in classifications 6 "Nombres Felices, Voces de Aliento, interjecciones", 7 "Socarronerías, Gracejos Lisura, Picardía Criolla", 8 "Nombres de Películas, Artistas, Cantos y Heroes", 9 "Títulos de Canciones Líricas y de Literatura", 10 "Nombres Caprichosos", 21 "Saludo, Simpatía", 22 "Relaciones Amorosas y Sentimentales", and 23 "Sentencias", will suggest that the connotative meanings of the slogans can and do represent several stages of integration and interest in national and international affairs.

The titles listed in category nine, "Titulos de Canciones Liricas y de Literatura" or the song and dance names found listed under categories six and seven suggest a similar scale of upward mobility from regionalism to a growing awareness of the individual, the nation, and beyond that, international influences.

It is possible to note other criterion which would perhaps be a gauge of awakening awareness of the outside world. Many of the names listed by Farfan simply as those of men or women or as "Historia Peruana--Peruanismos" reflect a graded knowledge of written material. From the national heroes celebrated in every small local school to the knowledge of movie titles (the advent of electricity), comic strip characters (fairly easy reading materials), newspaper columns (more advanced reading materials), and foreign languages (movies and newspapers), it is possible to postulate a rough correlation of the degree of literateness of the community or communities which the truck services.

It is even possible to postulate a degree of sophistication of the criollo as one studies the double and sometimes triple meaning of the slogans listed in categories six, seven, twenty-two and twenty-three.

In addition to that which Farfan recognizes as "picardia criollo", I would suggest that most of the men's names, some of the women's names and all of the zoological names be listed under that category.

An ethno-musicologist could probably find a similar stratification in the song titles, waltzes, tangos, and criollo boleros listed throughout the categories.

Two assumptions have been basic to the present linguistic classification: 1) that the drivers of the vehicles expect people whom they pass to be able to read and appreciate, not just the denotations, but also the connotations of their signs; and 2) that there is probably a scale of integration into national life which is traceable in the different slogans.

The languages used in the slogans reflect a gradual change in the command of the languages to which Limeños are exposed. One might postulate that the various levels of language competency reflect the degree of isolation of the drivers and their respective communities from the influences of Lima. In that case, the data reveal seven levels of integration.

The first level is that of slogans in Quechua. These suggest a recent acquaintance with the idea of communication through writing. They reveal something about the character of the truck's owner: he is an Indian and is not embarrassed to be known as one who speaks Quechua. He also expects that there are others, literate in Quechua, who will read and appreciate his slogan. There are eleven slogans which are written entirely in Quechua. They are: Anchiraico (Huancayo), Calato (nude), Chuquihuara, Cuica, Huayco, Naupari, Ollanta, Quispetongo, Shunco Shua, Tantaruna.

The second level is reflected in a degree of mixture of Spanish with Quechua. In four out of eight examples the Spanish article is used with a Quechua noun. This may indicate a beginning grasp of Spanish syntax. The other cases are unanalyzable without more knowledge of Quechua. Psychologically this stage probably indicates that the owner is just learning Spanish and is proud of that which he knows. He is beginning to identify with the world outside of his home environment. The slogans in this category are:

Amapola "Toqosiki"	Amauta, El
Carcocha Ben Hur	Auquirato, El
Machu Algo, Doctor	Chasqui, El
Manan cancho	Machay, El

The third level is noticeable in grammatical errors in Spanish. The most frequent error involves a misuse of the article. Usually the masculine article is used regardless of the gender of the noun which governs it. There is at least one case where the article has been omitted. The misuse of the article suggests that the individual's first language, probably Quechua: 1) has no article and 2) does not distinguish gender in the noun.

Slogans which misuse the article are:

Sombra Que Vuelve, El
Tarántula Negra, Yo Soy
Tortuga Veloz, El

More serious grammatical errors are reflected in at least five examples. These include the use of wrong verb forms, non-agreement of the noun with the article in regard to number, and the insertion of particles where accepted Spanish does not use them. These errors indicate that the speaker is not completely at home in the language that he is using.

This stage of language learning is considered to be more advanced than the previous level. On the other hand, the speaker's command of Spanish is still not that of the next level. These are people who are still imitating a language which they have not yet internalized completely. Examples of this type of language usage:

Laboriosos, El
Aguanta Patitas
Amor A Dios
Vamos a Ver dijo el Ciego y Nunca Pudo Ver
Apóstol San Santiago
¿Qué Es Lo Que Pasa Aquí A?
Hermanón

The fourth level of linguistic integration is that which indicates a command of the spoken language, but a lack of sophistication in spelling. The least serious of this type of error is that of punctuation and accents. The following are examples of this type:

Asi Es la Vida Hermano	Por que me dejas
Amor Porque Ya No Me Quieras	Por Que Ríes Así
A Mi Que	Proque Te Quiero
Dios Mío Tenme Piedad	Solo Por Ti Vengo
Donde Esta	Toma Coquito, Toma
Donde Estas Tu	Tu Donde Estas
Ladrones Alí Babá y 40 Mirtha	Vida Es Solo Para Tí,Mi
Mira Mujer Como Ando Por Ti	;Que Curvas!
No Sé Donde Voy	Que tal
Ola -- Qué Tal	Que Te Parece

A more serious spelling error is common to people without much formal education. It does not necessarily reflect that Spanish is a second language. The most common errors involve the letters of the Spanish alphabet which reflect an historical difference in pronunciation which is not present in the speech of even the most sophisticated Latin American Spanish speakers. They are purely orthographic errors. They include the use of b or v indiscriminately for the voiced bilabial fricative /b/, the use of z or s indiscriminately for the voiceless sibilant /s/, the use of k for c, and the omission of h preceding a vowel initial word. Examples of this type of error are:

Al Cerme pasar Sufres negra	Pienza y Diga
Ay Viene Mi Amor	Raresa
Baron, El	Rey de las Çurbas
Boy Para los 20--y Ronco	Selva, Uraçán de la
Kóndor de la Sierra	Soverano, El
Enriqueto	Todo un Barón
Jorge, Hay Viene	Tuy Tu Vida
Mona Liza	Vandolero, El
Perdoname Vida	

While the above two types of errors are made by native speakers of Spanish, the following two errors are made only by speakers of Spanish as a second language--or of speakers who have learned their Spanish from speakers of Spanish as a second language. They involve mispronunciations of common Spanish words. These errors probably reflect that the individual's first language did not have a distinction of two types of r, the trill and the flap. Two of the three examples substitute the orthographic symbol for flapped r where the trilled r is the norm:

Compadre Cerano, Mi
Pelirojo

The other pronunciation error substitutes the bilabial fricative (b) (orthographically split into "b" and "v") for the labialized bilabial fricative (bʷ).

Estas de Belta Cholito

The fifth level is indicated by the majority of the slogans listed. It reflects a command of Spanish which is that of a native speaker and a command of the Spanish orthography which

is above that of a first or second grade education. They reflect, I believe, a middle class control of the language.

The sixth level is that of pseudo-sophistication which makes an individual use parts of a second language and mix them with parts of his first language. It is a type of error made by people in the middle class. People who have graduated from primary school--and often secondary school--make this type of error. People without quite that much education can make the error if they have been exposed to foreign languages through movies comic books, newspapers, etc. Examples of this mixture of Spanish with English follow:

El Cadillac	Richard, Mi
Crack, El Hipo del	Robinson El Terrible
Douglas, El	Roe Master, El (road)
Ford Donde Vaya, Un	Tío Sam
Happy Day, El	Troman (True-Man) El
Johnito	Wing, El
Look--Take Easy Brother OK	Wisconsin--Mi Cielo Azul
Mister Perú	Yanque, El
Nelson, Mi	Voyage, El
Priti del Jai Alai (Pretty)	Cracksito Rojo, El

The seventh level is that of a competency in the use of slogans and names in a language which is spoken by bilinguals in the country and which is the national language of some country which has economic relations with Peru. This category has two levels--that which includes misspellings in the foreign language, and that which does not. Slogans with misspelling include citations from English, French, and German. Those which are correctly spelled are mostly from English.

Misspelled foreign words include the following:

From French:

Bom Voyage
Ye Ni Se Pa

From German:

Mein Kamtf

From English:

Bambi
Henrre
Lider
Mikey
Moly Dick (Printer's
error?)
Rock Roll

Correctly spelled words include:

Angel of the Road, The
Anglo Saxon
Beautiful Car, The
Brandy

Bucky
Buffalo Bill
California
Caryl Chessman
Clipper
Dandy
Dick
Eddy
Flash
God Help Me
Hobby
I Love Elda
Joe Carson
Kid Douglas
King, The
Look, take it easy, Brother

Love, My
Lusitania
Nancy
Queen Mary
Red Eagle
Riverside
Rock and Roll
Ronald
Take It Easy Brother
William
With a Song In My Heart
Wolud I Love You (Printer's
error)

Thus it is possible to identify at least seven distinct levels of linguistic sophistication represented in the lists of slogans. Two of the levels have inner sub classifications which are not considered important enough to classify as distinct levels.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹This paper was originally prepared for a class in Social Anthropology at Indiana University, 1966.
- ²Holmberg, A.R.. "Changing Community Attitudes and Values in Peru: A Case Study in Guided Change", pp. 71-2.
- ³"Onomástica de Vehículos", 1957, pp. 140-154, 1960, pp. 285-6.

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