

The Cash Value of Style in the Andean Marketplace¹

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1. Literal and Theoretical Markets

Some time ago I enrolled in a linguistic anthropology graduate seminar where, among the usual linguistics and anthropology students, were a pair of students from the advertising department. Since graduate students do not usually have the luxury of enrolling in courses that do not directly support our degree plans, some of my classmates and I wondered what had brought these two seemingly out of their field to sit around the table with us. In part, this paper tries to explain what those advertisers sought to gain by familiarizing themselves with linguistic anthropology approaches and analyses.

Different from linguistics and anthropology, within which the generation of knowledge through field research and data analysis is usually thought of as an end unto itself, advertising, as I understand it, is specifically oriented towards the goal of promoting sales of a product or service, and treats research and its results as tools in order to accomplish this goal. If I can discard the idea that the two advertising students enrolled in a linguistic anthropology course on a whim, then I have to assume that they were there because they thought they stood to gain something as advertisers by taking a close look at language. That is to say, they wanted to learn about how language makes money.

In the social sciences the idea of a “linguistic marketplace” has been a useful concept with which to approach the relationship between linguistic practice and cultural value systems (Bourdieu, 1991; Gal, 1989; Irvine, 1989). The discussion of linguistic marketplaces and economies has been an analytical and theoretical project using a market analogy to examine language ideology and linguistic exchanges. In a few cases this project has included ethnographic studies of literal marketplaces similar to the one I present in this paper (Kapchan, 1998; French, 2001; Bauman, 2001). Moving from a discussion of “linguistic marketplaces” and “linguistic economies” into one of linguistic and ethnographic field research on language in market transactions crosses a fine line between

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economic analogy and literal economic activity. It requires considering both language ideology and examples of style in linguistic performance. Irvine, who has written extensively about both language ideology and stylistic variation, offers a particularly useful definition of style in discourse which states that through stylistic speech in an ideological field people “negotiate their positions and goals within a system of distinctness and possibilities” (2001, p.24). When such goals are economic in nature, as they often are at market, then marketplace speech such as market calls, sales pitches and bartering in distinct codes and registers can reveal the ways that linguistic distinctions have effect on quantifiable economic transactions.

In the following two market case studies from highland Ecuador I will look at language in the marketplace and consider how linguistic value systems interact with the economic values and exchanges within the market.

2. Monetary Motivation for Codeswitching

The Saturday market in the town of Zumbagua in central Ecuador is on a road that connects the Andean valleys with the tropical coast, drawing a diversity of highland and lowland people and products. Spanish-speaking non-indigenous traders come into contact with indigenous Quichua speakers and employ linguistic strategies like learning short sales pitches in Quichua. This may not seem terribly remarkable, but over years of fieldwork in Ecuador I have only very rarely heard non-indigenous people use Quichua, making these market examples stand out distinctly. In the national culture of Ecuador, Quichua is usually eclipsed by Spanish at school, on television, and in most official and public spaces. Yet here these Spanish-speakers were shouting Quichua phrases over loudspeakers into a crowded plaza in a very public way.

The following example shows a salesman advertising chicken parts with phrases of Quichua and Spanish in repetitious parallel patterning. Each line is of approximately the same length and is followed by a short pause. Internally, each line shows further parallelism, in the double repetition of identical short phrases (in line 1: *shamuy rantingui*, “come and buy” ; in line 3: *racu chaqui*, “meaty leg”; in line 5: *acá le pesamos*, “we weigh it for you here”) and the triple repetition of similar short phrases (in line 4: *racu chaqui, racu uma, racu cunga*, “meaty legs, meaty heads, meaty necks”):

- (1) ZUMBAGUA (Nov. 2001) [Spanish-origin items in *italics*. Diminutives in **bold.**]
1. Shamuy rantingui *caserita* shamuy rantingui. Quimsa *libra paga* shug *dolar*.
come-IMP buy-2sg shoppers-DIM come-IMP buy-2sg 3lb. pay-IMP one dollar
Come and buy, little shopper, come and buy! Three pounds, pay one dollar.
 2. Racu chaqui *caserita*, racu chaqui, racu chaqui, racu uma, racu cunga.
thick foot shopperDIM thick foot thick foot thick head thick neck
Meaty feet, little shopper, meaty feet.
 3. *Acá le pesamos casera, acá le pesamos, acá le pesamos*.
here 2 weigh-1pl shopper here 2 weigh-1pl here 2 weigh-1pl
We weigh them for you here, shopper, we weigh them here, etc.
 4. *Tres libras de menudencia de pollo paga un dolar*.
three pound(pl) of cheap-parts of chicken payIMP one dollar

Three pounds of chicken parts, pay one dollar.

When I asked market-goers about the man at the loudspeaker they assured me that he did not use Quichua beyond these market calls. Similar to what Rampton (1995) calls “crossing,” he used a code that did not ethnically “belong” to him, in the sense that he had neither conversational skills in nor identity associations with the language. Examples of “crossing,” like many kinds of codeswitching, can be difficult to interpret in terms of speaker motivation. However, I believe that literal market language, as opposed to a metaphoric “linguistic marketplace,” allows us the analytical luxury of assuming that we *do* know at least part of the seller’s motivation: he or she wants to make a sale. The salesman codeswitched into Quichua because he wanted to make a sale to Quichua-speaking people. Since most indigenous shoppers understand Spanish, the codeswitching was primarily a stylistic move. Salespeople can be observed to use specific codes with specific types of customers as they evaluate which code will be more profitable—*literally* profitable—with whom. Communication of the referential content of a sales pitch is only one of many considerations of salespeople as they try to design distinctly appealing and often poetic messages; Bauman’s (2001) look at speech genres in a Mexican market shows some of the many layers of style and poetics that go into market interactions

The next example from the Zumbagua market shows how a salesman rapidly switched between codes as he tried to sell clothing to different shoppers. The salesman and a male customer, both Quichua speakers, opted to use Spanish for their transaction, but when an indigenous woman stopped to look at the salesman’s wares, the salesman made a brief sales pitch to her in Quichua (lines 8-10).

- (2) ZUMBAGUA (June 2003) [Spanish-origin items in *italics*. Diminutives in **bold.**]
1. Shopper: *Este cuanto deja?* <Spanish
This how much (will you) let (me have it for)?
 2. Salesman: *Seis dolar.*
Six dollar(s).
 3. Shopper: *Mucho está.*
It’s too much.
 4. Salesman: *Seis dolar es. Que voy a mentir?*
It’s six dollar(s). Why would I lie?
 5. *Solo pidiendo no mas . . .*
Only if you special order . . .
 6. Shopper: *Ayer . . .*
(But) yesterday . . .
 7. Salesman: *Solo pide no mas.* <Spanish
Just special order. to man
 8. *Chay faldahuata tian mujer.* <Quichua
DEM skirt-DIM-DO exist3 woman to woman
I have those (little) skirts, ma’am.

9. Chay**huata** *quince dolares*.
DEM-DIM-DO fifteen dollars
Those (little ones) for fifteen dollars
10. Chay *pañohuata* *mújer*.
DEM shawl-DIM-DO woman
Those (little) shawls, ma'am.
11. Shopper: *Seis para llevar*. <Spanish
Six and I'll take it. to man
12. Salesman: *No papito, siete dije ya, lleve no mas a siete dolares*.
No, (little) buddy, I said seven, take it for just seven dollars.

In a study of market life, gender and ethnic identity in the Southern Highlands of Peru entitled “Women are more Indian,” de la Cadena (1995) describes similarly gendered attitudes about cultural behavior, dress and other features—and I would emphasize indigenous language in the case of this example—that relate the Andean female identity to the classic markers of indigenous culture. Responding to similar value systems present in highland Ecuador, the salesman adapts his code choice with respect to the gender of his potential customer. Men, by contrast, often verbally construct themselves as Spanish speakers. Notably, the woman in this example remained silent; the data is one-sided and shows us only how the salesman was organizing code choice, projecting ideas of Andean female identity onto his customer. I am only able to peripherally address the complexities of ethnicity and gender in the Andes here; most relevant in this discussion of market language is the point that salespeople’s understanding of ethnic and gender categories is integral to how they organize their stylistic performances towards shoppers.

Before ending this section, I will briefly note one code-internal stylistic feature of the salesman’s Quichua sales pitch (lines 8-10): he makes repeated use of the diminutive suffix *hua*, (probably from the word for baby, *huahua*). Although this is hardly a large enough sample to make any conclusions about the Quichua sales pitch as a speech genre, the high occurrence of the diminutive (once per line, or about 16% of total morphemes) is worth noting; it is a point that I will further develop later in this paper when a second example of a Quichua sales pitch shows similar rampant diminutive marking.

3. Morphology, Morphology for Sale!

Since I began the previous section with chicken vendors, I see no reason to interrupt this trend. The chicken restaurant across the street from the Otavalo market in the northern Ecuadorian Andes has a “welcome” sign on each of four doors: one Spanish, one English, one Quichua and one French, a nod towards the multilingual bustle outside. The referential content on each door is the same; it is the distinct contrast of codes that is meaningful.

Every Saturday crowds of tourists from Europe and North America barter with the Otavalan indigenous people at one of the most important handicraft markets in South America. In this context English and other foreign languages interact with the national language, Spanish, and the indigenous local language, Quichua, in complex negotiations.

The following example shows three excerpts from a five-minute recording of

interactions at one market stall. The first part begins with a Quichua salesman using a few phrases of English to attract tourists to look at his textiles (lines 1-4). The tourists then switched to German (lines 5-6), discussing the purchase between them. They then addressed the salesman in Spanish (line 8), at which point he ceased trying to use English as a common code, quickly adapting to his customer's preference for Spanish (lines 9-10).

- (3) a. OTAVALO (Nov. 2003) [Spanish items in *italics*. German in **bold**.]
1. Salesman: Shirt, this good price. It's buy one get one free for you. <English
 2. Buy of a different kind? Look. Different color?
 3. This handmade. In wash no problem. This color . . .
 4. Tourist1: *No se, no se.* <Spanish
I don't know, I don't know. to salesman
 5. **Sechs, (??) finde ich groß, oder?** <German
six. (??) it's too big, don't you think? to tourist2
 6. **Ist etwas zu groß für sechs, oder?**
it's a little too big for six, don't you think?
- [several seconds cut]
7. Salesman: This color? <English
 8. Tourist1: *Para una niña de seis años.* <Spanish
For a girl of six years. to salesman
 9. Salesman: *Si, ese es para seis años. Si, ese es.* <Spanish
Yes, that is for six years. Yes, that is. to tourists
 10. *Para seis años. Esta. Esta para seis años. Rojo?*
For six years. This. This for six years. Red?

This verbal exchange did not lead to an exchange of goods and currency. The tourists walked away, at which point another code emerged among the people at the market stall: the in-group indigenous language, Quichua. The shift from English and Spanish into Quichua not only represents a shift of code, but also a shift from conversation among strangers to talk among locals who share a highly specific understanding of norms and speech styles within the local community. I include the following excerpt in order to present an intimate interaction style that contrasts with the impersonal bartering shown above. Teasing is a common feature of Quichua discourse among close friends and family; the example below shows a joking argument in which a man teased an unmarried saleswoman about her supposed future as a bedraggled and battered housewife.

- (3) b. [Spanish-origin items in *italics*.]
11. Neighbor: Maicanhuanpish *casarashpaca* . . . <Quichua
which-with-also marry-GER-FOC
Whoever you get married to . . .
 12. Saleswoman: Na *casarana* . . .
no marryINF
I won't get married . . .

13. Neighbor: Shugtaca huicsayuq, shug shugtaca . . .
one-DO-FOC belly-haver one one-DO-FOC
With one (baby) in the belly, and the other (baby) . . .
14. Saleswoman: *Gulpi* sobrinocunata casarachish quipa.
all one nephews/nieces-pl-DO-FOC marry-CAUS-GER after
Not until we get all my nephews married first.
15. Neighbor: Shugpish aparishca.
one.also take-REFL-PART
Carrying around the other (baby).
16. *Lado* ñahui verdeyashca nin.
side eye bruise-PART say-3pl
With a black eye on one side, they say.
17. *Repollo repollo coles* aparishca está.
cabbage cabbage cabbages take-REFL-PART be-3sg
You'll be carrying cabbage (home for dinner).
18. Saleswoman: *Santo Dios!*
Holy God! [both: LAUGHTER]

In the examples above, Spanish, English, German and Quichua were all heard within a few minutes of each other at the same market stall, by most standards constituting a rather complex multilingual environment. The teasing ended as more shoppers (two tourists and an Ecuadorian who appeared to be guiding them) approached and engaged in negotiations in English and Spanish that this time led to a successful sales transaction.

- (3) c. [Spanish items in *italics*. The discourse marker “yeah” is underlined.]
19. Saleswoman: Two, three, good price, yeah? I have different color. <English
20. Guide: Watch out when they say “special price for you.”
21. Saleswoman: Right, yeah, ha ha. Look at the color.
[several seconds of bartering/laughter cut]
22. Tourist3: Well, do you wanna get one of those for your secretary?
23. Saleswoman: Maybe two scarves, good price, yeah?
24. Guide: *A diez.* <Spanish
For ten (dollars).
25. Tourist3: *Quizás.*
Maybe.
26. Guide: *Por dos.*
For two (scarves).
27. Saleswoman: *A doce, ya, a doce.*
For twelve, okay, for twelve,
28. Tourist3: If it's six for one, then twice is not such a good price. <English
29. Saleswoman: Okay, okay yeah. For two ten dollar, yeah?

30. Tourist3: Alright, okay.
31. Saleswoman: In a big plastic bag.
32. Tourist3: Okay.
33. Saleswoman: What color?

While the tourist may feel that bargaining from twelve dollars down to ten dollars was quite an astute feat, if she had persisted she would probably have lowered the price much further. The saleswoman achieved a profitable interaction largely by employing stylistic devices such as frequent use of the discourse marker “yeah” in ways similar to how a native English speaker might. Judging from her English-speaking customer’s positive reaction, she made herself not just intelligible but likable and convincing for her interlocutors, and she appears to have profited economically from her skilled linguistic performance.

For my final example of sales speech, I will take a closer look at the code-internal stylistic possibilities for increasing economic effect. The following was recorded in a community near Otavalo when, as I recorded my host family’s afternoon interactions, a traveling salesman came into the yard and began a lengthy sales pitch about the bottles of vitamins he was selling. The salesman’s discourse shows several features associated with sales pitches, including a rhythm and breath-structure with a memorized and recited quality - but beyond prosodic features, this excerpt of sales discourse is morphologically distinct, particularly in the high instance of diminutive marking.

- (4) a. NEAR OTAVALO (July 2002) [Spanish-origin items in *italics*. Diminutive suffixes in **bold**. Respect title is underlined.]
 1. Ama nanaycuna japichun chasnacunapagmi ninan alli *vitaminagu* can.
not pain-pl catch-SUB like-that-pl-for-AF very good vitamin-DIM-AF be-3sg
So that pain won’t strike, things like that, they’re super good (little) vitamins.
 2. Shinallata chay ñucanchi tulluguta sinchiyachishpa catingapag
Like.that-LIM-DO that 1pl bone-DIM-DO strong-CAUS-GER follow-in.order.to
Just like that, they work to keep our (little) bones strong.
 3. shinallata ñucanchi *cuerpogu* shinallata sinchigu causachun,
like-that-LIM-DO 1pl-POSS body-DIM like.that-LIM-DO strong-DIM live-SUB
Just like that, our (little) body, like that, (a little more) strongly lives.
 4. shinallata chaygu ñaca *memoriapagpash* ninan alli can
like.that-LIM-DO that-DIM now-FOC memory-for-also good be-3sg
Just like that, that (little product) is now super good for the memory too.
 5. ñucanchi imagutapash cungarin chaylla chasnacunapag ninan allimi can *tii*
1pl what-LIM-DO-also forget-REFL-3 that-LIM like.that-pl-for very good-AF be-3 sir
We forget any (little) thing also, that, for things like that it’s super good, sir.
 6. shinallata chayguta saquishpa canchi *a creditopi y al contado* shinallata.
like.that-LIM-DO that-DIM-DO leave-GER be-1pl for credit-LOC and cash likeLIM-DO
Just like that, that (little thing) we leave for credit and for cash, just like that.

Similar to the earlier example of Quichua sales discourse from the Zumbagua market,

14. agchaguta cuchungapag munashpa
hair-DIM-DO cut-in.order.to want-GER
and you are wanting to get their (little) hair cut,
15. shug *igualaringapag* chaygucunapish *gratis* can
one equal.out-REFL-in.order.to that-DIM-pl-also free be-3pl
one (haircut) in order to equal out; those (little) things as well are also free,
16. chaygucunami chaypi *ventaja* shamun
that-DIM-pl-AF thereLOC advantage come-3sg
in those (little) things, in there, an advantage comes.
17. shinallata chayguta saquishpa canchi a *crédito y al contado*gu,
like.that-LIM-DO that-DIM-DO leave-GER for credit and for cash-DIM
Just like that, that (little) thing we can leave for credit or for cash,
18. o a *crédito* saquishpa canchi a *catorce dolares* o shinallata a *contado once dolares*
or for credit leave-GER be-1pl for 14 dollars or like.that-LIM-DO for cash 11 dollars
or for credit we can leave it for 14 dollars, or just like that for 11 dollars cash,
19. shinallata *treinta dias de plazo* saquinacunchi a *crédito*
like.that-LIM-DO thirty days of payment.term leave-REC-1pl for credit
just like that, for thirty day payments we leave it on credit.
20. *animanguichiylla* ñucanchi *cuerpopag* ninan alli *vitaminagumi*.
animate-CAUS-IMP-LIM 1pl-POSS body-for very good vitamin-DIM-AF
Just motivate yourselves; for our body it's super good (little) vitamins.

The speaker in the above example made a shift into a distinct, hyper-polite style in an effort to construct a sales pitch that would be appealing for his interlocutors, and, he hoped, profitable for himself. As noted above, one of the speech styles associated with polite Quichua discourse is the use of a morphologically distinct register of frequent diminutive marking. My data suggests that the use of diminutive suffixes in sales pitches is similar in at least two regional dialects, even when suffixes are derived differently. It might even be possible to consider this feature in terms of language contact between local dialects of Quichua and Spanish, since interesting uses of diminutive marking are also common among speakers of Ecuadorian Spanish in the context of economic transactions.² I certainly have learned to sound all of my mental alarms when an Ecuadorian taxi driver uses a diminutive marker when quoting a fare: “*diez dolaritos*” [ten dollar-DIM-pl], or “ten little dollars,” invariably means that the appropriate fare is actually only two or three dollars. The polite presentation attempts to soften the blow of the quadrupled price. One rule of the cash value of style in the intersection of money and morphology is to watch out for diminutive suffixes or you may get overcharged.

4. Profitable Speech

Drawing on Irvine's (2001) insight about linguistic style's basis in systems of distinctions, I have shown examples of some of the meaningful distinctions associated

² A close look at diminutive marking in Spanish reveals a number of different functions and connotations building off a metaphor of “smallness” (Menchaca, 1998). Among these pragmatic and grammatical extensions of the diminutive is its use in polite registers, a function that Escobar (2001) observes to be particularly notable in varieties of Spanish that are in contact with Quechua.

with stylistic market language. These distinctions work simultaneously on a number of levels. Different codes are used for different interaction styles, including bartering among strangers, conversation among locals, and sales pitches directed toward anyone in hearing range. Salespeople negotiate codes and interaction types according to their knowledge of customers' social identities, corresponding to local distinctions between male and female, indigenous and non-indigenous, Ecuadorian and foreign, etc. And code-internally, salespeople try to take full advantage of a language's artistic possibilities, employing distinct stylistic devices such as parallelism and hyper-politeness. Through all of these considerations and linguistic possibilities salespeople tailor their speech to be appealing to the customer and ultimately profitable for themselves.

For further research on the relationship between economic and linguistic transactions, one could use a very large data sample in order to catalogue a set of the most common aspects of multilingual and poetic stylistic performances at market and attempt to correlate their usage with the most economically successful salespeople in order to get a sense of which combinations of linguistic distinctions make more money. In fact, I believe that advertisers actually do similar studies, and what I refer to as "research in a market," they call "market research." One of the purposes of market research is to decide on appealing stylistic packages for the advertiser's message, and advertising professionals may very well be more advanced than linguistic anthropologists in discovering what kinds of code and style shifting yield more profit. If I am not mistaken, this explains what the two advertising students were aiming for when they enrolled in our linguistic anthropology seminar. More like Andean market vendors than social scientists, they were less interested in theorizing about the linguistic economy for its own sake and more interested in harnessing language's money-making power at market.

Key to abbreviations:

DIM	diminutive	SPEC	speculative	PART	participle
IMP	imperative	FOC	focus	DO	direct object
DEM	demonstrative	POSS	possessive	VB	verbalizer
CAUS	causative	REFL	reflexive	1,2,3	person
LIM	limitative	SUB	subjunctive	sg	singular
AF	affirmative	GER	gerund	pl	plural

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