# Chapter 12

# Trans[cultura]linguación:
## An Intercultural Approach to the Revitalization of Indigenous Languages

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## ABSTRACT

*Learning languages with the intention to understand cultures is the central premise of trans[cultura] linguación. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and reflect on the teaching and learning process of the Quechua language for students in Toronto (Canada) and other participants in the diaspora who wanted to learn more about the Quechua culture or revitalize their heritage language. Deploying a hybrid ethnographic approach to collect data from public online and in-person classes, this research project evidenced a cultural-oriented approach to assert Quechua speakers' identity and to spark curiosity for learning Indigenous languages in international contexts. A Quechua Collective, along with language teachers, used a synergic pedagogical approach to engage students in language learning and appreciation through various online and in-person interactive activities. This chapter sheds light on promising practices that seek to foster a sense of community, well-being, and the promotion of social cohesion and human coexistence.*

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is a vague and sometimes unclear concept yet it refers to the individual and collective ways of thinking, believing and knowing a specific group (Bhabha, 2004; Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Interculturality and interculturalism respectively refer to the processes of communication and interaction between people or groups with identities of different specific cultures, allowing for the integration and enrichment of coexistence among peoples (Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021). Similarly, an intercultural approach to education means moving beyond mere passive acceptance of multiple cultures and instead promoting dialogue and interaction between cultures (López Sáenz & Penas Ibáñez, 2006).

In light of these concepts, this chapter adds to the body of literature on intercultural education and expands on the term Trans[cultura]linguación (Ortega, 2019), which is a purposeful pedagogical transaction between languages and/or variations of the same language with a focus on comparing other languages. In this process, students learn about their own culture as they engage in language learning activities to intentionally learn about other cultures.

I utilized the Ontoepistemological Oneness for Teaching and Research framework - OTR - (Ortega, 2021a, 2021c) that succinctly elucidates how research and pedagogical approaches can work for humanization in relation to not only participants' sociocultural contexts, but their emotions in connections with their communities. Using a hybrid ethnographic coupled with a reflective research approach, I documented my observations of Quechua language teachers' pedagogical approaches during public in-person and online lessons for Latin Americans in the diaspora (in Canada) and others who were seeking to learn or revitalize their home and heritage language.

During these observations, I noticed how teachers and students reinforced their own cultural identities and they learned to respect and understand other peoples' differences. As an example of this, in the in-person class, a Quechua teacher (in Canada) explained cultural concepts while comparing them with Peruvian Spanish and English while students compare with other Latinamerican variations of Spanish and variations of English. In the meantime, online Quechua teachers in Perú were able to help students to connect back to their roots while (re)learning their ancestral language or simply sparking curiosity to learn the Andean language and culture. Most importantly, my reflections on the observations of the pedagogical exercises accounted for an intercultural approach to learning about power relations to critically observe what cultures hold more power than others (Walsh, 2012). Students and teachers realized not only that their (heritage/mother) language is an important part of their identity but as a way to interrogate and problematize Western colonial imposed forms of culture and language.

I argue that these experiences in language teaching promote critical intercultural education (Ferrão Candau, 2019) towards 1) a holistic approach in which teachers and students learn to respect other cultures, 2) a process of becoming aware of other cultures, 3) an understanding that there is not only truth, 4) the democratization of language teaching and learning, and 5) collaboration among peers. I propose that critical inter/pluriculturality can potentially engage the presence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions, through dialogue and mutual respect with the main goal of promoting global citizenship and human coexistence.

This book chapter is divided into the following sections, the first part provides an overview of the context and background of the inquiry process, framework, and methodology. The next part describes pedagogical practices considering the guiding concepts and the last part presents possible solutions, recommendations, and future directions for the revitalization of Indigenous languages.

## CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Since I was young, I have always been interested in learning languages to understand other cultures. I became a language educator and researcher to promote language learning as a tool for intercultural understanding. As such, my role has been as an advocate for teaching and learning methodologies that seek to support the revitalization of endangered languages with a focus on interculturality. In the past few years, the centre of my research has been about exploring how languages can help us connect as humans, I learned to understand that languages are systems not only for communication but instruments of social

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