General Characteristics & Verbal Morphology in Ancash Quechua

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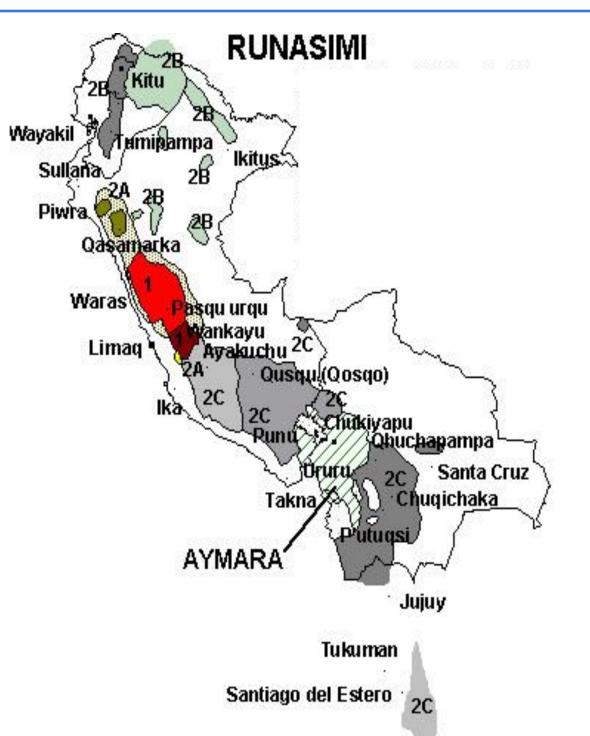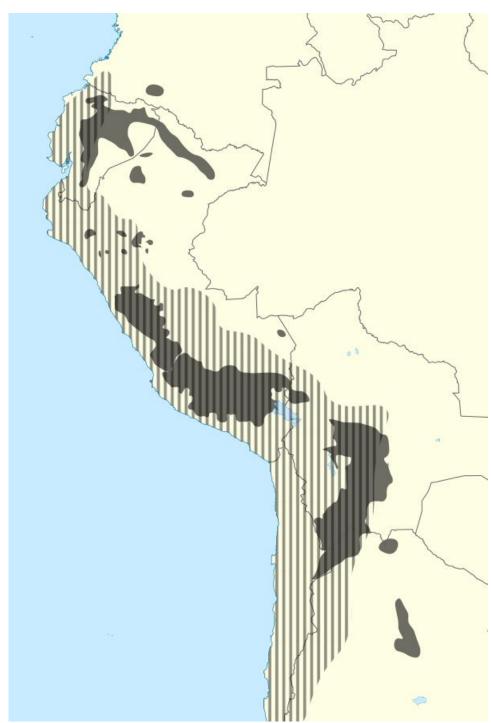
Research Goals

1. Develop a general understanding of the morphosyntactic characteristics of Ancash Quechua.
2. Learn and practice ethical fieldwork methods and prioritize speaker agency and community autonomy.

Background Information

- The Incan Empire was the largest empire in pre-Columbian American, encompassing areas of modern-day Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, and Colombia.
- The Incan Empire fell to Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century, leading to significant cultural and demographic shifts in the region.
- Three language families are closely associated with the Incan Empire:
  - Quechua Language Family: Known as 'the language of the Incas'; was used extensively across the Incan Empire for administration and cultural integration.
  - Aymaran Language Family: Closely related to Quechua; was spoken by many key populations within the Incan Empire.
  - Puquina Language Family: Historically associated with pre-Incan cultures and spoken in select regions during the Incan Empire.
- Ancash Quechua (AQ) is one of the varieties of the Quechua language family spoken in the Ancash region of Peru.

Left: Map of Runasimi Dialects (Image Credit: Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática)

Right: The gray stripes show the historical extent of the Incan Empire. The dark gray areas are where Quechua is still spoken (Image Credit: Wikipedia)

Literature Review

- Unfortunately, this variety of Quechua has not been studied by linguists in decades, meaning we often have to work from literature on **related varieties** and check with our speaker to see if they match up.
- Weber, 1989: *A Grammar of Huallaga (Huánuco) Quechua* is an extensive grammar of a related Quechua variety.

Methodology

Accumulating language data and corpus text was accomplished through
- 90 minute **weekly elicitation sessions** with a native-speaker consultant. Sessions were led by a rotating team of three linguists: an elicitor, a transcriber, and a note-taker.
- Weekly **recording sessions** with a native-speaker consultant to verify transcribed data from elicitation sessions.
- As-needed **emails** with a native-speaker consultant to get grammaticality judgments on hypothesized researcher-generated sentences.

- **We collected more than 750 translated items** over 3 months, ranging from single words to complex sentences.
- We also learned the preferred orthography of the native-speaker consultant, allowing ease of elicitation and communication.

General Characteristics

SOV word order: *Pay papata mikun.* | She potato.ACC eat.3SG
         Subj Obj Verb

Agglutinative: *yacha-ku-yka-ya-ru-n* | know-REFL-PROG-PL-PST-3
         "they were learning"

- This language has very regular and agglutinating morphology. Verbs can be very complex and convey many meanings.
- Due to the case morphology, AQ is fairly flexible in word order. For example, sentences can be rearranged into VSO order.
- AQ is a nominative-accusative language. Case is marked by suffixes that attach at the end of the noun phrase.

Case: nominative (∅), accusative (*-ta*), genitive (*-pa*), allative (*-man*), ablative (*-pita*), locative (*-chaw*), instrumental (*-wan*)

Pro-drop: Since subject/object information is always encoded in the verb, pronouns are often optional.

Verbal Morpheme Order

Verb Stem	*miku* "eat"	*chikisa* "tickle"	*rika* "see"
Case	-ku (REFL)	-tsi (CAUS)	
Number	-ya (PL)		
Object	-ma (1 ACC)	-sha (2 ACC, 3 NOM)	
Tense	-ru (recent PST)	-ra (distant PST)	*insuff. data for future
Subject	-: (1ST)	-nki (2ND)	-n (3RD)
Negation	mana _____ -tsu	ama _____ -tsu (IMP)	
Focus	-ku (Q)	-m (DECL)	

Pronouns

I noʁa	We (inclusive) noʁakuna
You ʁam	You all ʁamkuna
He/She paɪ	They paɪkuna
We (exclusive) noʁantsik	

AQ has **seven** subject pronouns: he and she are not differentiated. There is a difference between **we** that includes the person you are speaking to, and **we** excluding the person you are speaking to.

Below: The colons represent lengthening of the preceding vowel, e.g. [raa]. Final vowels are also lowered (e.g. [u] -> [o]) in the first person forms. **These patterns are extremely regular between verb forms.**

Agreement Patterns

Possesive (Nouns)

-:	-:-kuna
-ki	-ki-kuna
-ŋ	-ŋ-kuna
-:-kuna	

Present

-:	-ya-:
-ŋki	-ya-ŋki
-ŋ	-ya-ŋ
-ntsik	

Past

-ra-:	-ya-ra-:
-ra-iki	-ya-ra-iki
-ra-ŋ	-ya-ra-ŋ
-ra-ntsik	

^ also can be -ru

Future

-ʃa-:	-ya-ʃa-:
-ŋki	-ya-ŋki
-ŋʁa	-ya-ŋʁa
-ʃuŋ / -ntsik	

-ʃuŋ can have volitional meaning

Example Sentences

Hatun kushisha llullu ahirun.
big   happy.ADJZ baby laugh.PST.3SG
"The big happy baby laughed."

Nuqa Runashimita yachakuykaa.
I   Quechua.ACC   know.REFL.PROG
"I am studying Quechua."

Ganyan mamaa nuqata mikutsimaran.
Yesterday mother.POSS me.ACC eat.CAUS.1SG-ACC.PST.3SG
"Yesterday, my mother fed me."

Gamkuna kafetaku tetaku munayanki?
You.PL   coffee.ACC.Q tea.ACC.Q   want.PL.2
"Do y'all want coffee or tea?"

In eliciting sentences, we've used culturally relevant nouns, such as potatoes, llamas, and guinea pigs. Working from nouns and verbs we're familiar with allows for the isolation of new morphemes and grammatical structures.

Next Steps

- Although our class is ending, future research can and should be done to expand on our findings. More than a semester is needed to adequately document a language. Our research has only scratched the surface of topics like negation, prepositional morphemes, grammatical moods, loan word phonology, etc.
- Our research so far should be disseminated, especially since this variety of Quechua has not been documented in any depth for decades.
- We are grateful to have had the opportunity to work with a single native speaker who has a high level of metalinguistic awareness. Future research should incorporate speakers of various ages and genders to test the conclusions arrived at during this semester. Data from our native speaker consultant William indicates frequent generational differences in language-usage, especially lexicon.
- Among Quechuan languages, Ancash belongs to an understudied and dialectically more diverse branch of the family. This represents a prime opportunity for future study, which would also help develop a better understanding of the language tree.

Acknowledgements