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Indigenous Scholar at IU Involved in Language and Cultural Revitalization

Interview with Serafín M. Coronel-Molina, Assistant Professor of Language Education

By Joseph Stahlman

¡Limaykullayki!

Can you tell me the positions you hold on the IU campus? (like School of Education., NAIS Committee, etc.)

I am an Assistant Professor of Language Education in the Department of Literacy, Culture and Language Education (LCLE) of the School of Education. I am also Associate Faculty with the American Indian Studies Research Institute (AISRI), Affiliated Faculty in the International Studies Program, Adjunct Faculty in the Latino Studies Program, an Adjunct Assistant Professor of American Studies in the American Studies Program, an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology, Core Faculty in the Minority Languages and Cultures of Latin American Program (MLCP), and Affiliated Faculty with the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS).

Why did you choose to teach at IU?

I decided to come to IU because it is a tier one academic and research institution with a national and international reputation, a renowned faculty and a wonderful student body. Before my official campus visit in 2007, I was invited to visit IU a couple of times. During those visits, I explored the resources and research opportunities. I visited several departments and research centers and talked to key people there, and I also explored the city of Bloomington. Many people played an important role in my decision during the strategic hiring process. I had the support of my colleagues in the Department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education, the Deans of the School of Education, and people at the University level as well. When I was officially offered a position in the Department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education, I enthusiastically accepted.

Why did you take part in the NAIS minor?

I really like the interdisciplinary study, and the national and international focus of NAIS (United States, Mexico, Canada and the rest of the Americas). As a South American Indian myself, I am interested in interdisciplinary Indigenous Studies in the Americas from local, regional, national and international perspectives.

What classes do you teach within the NAIS minor?

In the spring of 2009, I taught EDUC-L630 Topics in Language Education: Research Seminar in Language Policy and Planning in Education from Local, National and International Perspectives. This class was cross-listed with American Studies (G751 Seminar in American Studies), Anthropology, Latin American Studies, Linguistics, Second Language Studies and Spanish and Portuguese. During the current semester (Spring 2010), I am teaching a new course I designed titled EDUC-L750 / L630 Topical Seminar in Reading/Topics in Language Education: Seminar in Sociolinguistics and Linguistic Anthropology in Education. Although this class is cross-listed with the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS), it is not being offered through the NAIS minor. However, there are two Native American students enrolled in it (Standing Bear Kroupa and Wanbdi Waci).

Serafin, you are very knowledgeable about many subject and research areas. Are there resources at IU that students and faculty may not be aware of in terms of American Indian studies?

These are some online resources that faculty and students might want to explore:

IU Libraries – Cultural Resources Native American

http://www.libraries.iub.edu/index.php?pageId=3678

Virtual Library – American Indians

http://hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAteach.html

Printed Music Publishers

http://library.music.indiana.edu/music_resources/publ.html

Minority Languages and Cultures of Latin America Program (MLCP)

http://www.indiana.edu/~mlcp/index.php

> "At some point, I would like to live on a Native American reservation for awhile in order to learn more about the Native American sociolinguistic and sociocultural reality."

Can you tell me about some of your research endeavors?

In general terms, my research explores complex and diverse issues of languages, cultures, ethnicities and identities at the societal and individual levels. My scholarship is divided into two strands: 1) educational linguistics/macro-sociolinguistics from interdisciplinary perspectives and 2) Andean micro-sociolinguistics and theoretical linguistics. The scope of my research is broad and bridges several academic fields due to its multidisciplinary nature.

While a great deal of my work focuses on language policy and revitalization, the applicability of my work goes beyond just these two areas. Since my research is of an interdisciplinary nature, it helps me to expand my areas of expertise (and thus also makes me capable of teaching a broader array of courses. This is just one way in which my research informs my teaching). I draw on fields as diverse as sociolinguistics, language policy and planning, applied linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and sociology and history of the Andes. In addition, I feel that ethnographic research is important for gaining an in-depth understanding of intercultural interactions. This interdisciplinarity broadens the focus of my research and makes it relevant to a number of fields beyond the politics of language, including those same fields that contribute to my theo-

retical foundations, such as sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, but also linguistics applied to language pedagogy, cultural studies, and Latin American studies. I am thus a more flexible researcher with multidisciplinary applicability.

My research related to educational linguistics/macro-sociolinguistics follows lines such as the ethnographic exploration of language policy and planning from local, regional, national and international perspectives; ethnographic exploration of language ideologies and power; case studies of language shift, maintenance, and multiple means of revitalization of endangered languages around the world; the significance and impact of bilingual education in South America; tracing the trajectories and sociocultural impact of indigenous literacies in the Americas; the interrelationships of Andean languages, cultures and identities; corpus development/lexicography (dictionaries and phrasebooks) of the Quechua language; translations of works into Quechua as part of language planning (modernization). My scholarly contributions also have practical and theoretical applications. In other words, I do not only write about theoretical issues, but am also involved in the development of diverse teaching materials for the revitalization of endangered languages and cultures such as Quechua and Aymara in the Andean region of South America.

In terms of my research related to Andean microsociolinguistics and theoretical linguistics, I focus on language contact phenomena in the Andes. Contact phenomena among Spanish, Quechua and Aymara are widely evident in the Andean territory of South America. Due to prolonged contact these languages have all developed hybrid linguistic features at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic and pragmatic levels.

In terms of being and researching *indígenas* of Latin America, do you feel there are many differences between First Nations communities of the North and the South?

Obviously, there are some differences between these groups. For instance, according to local and social locations, the

Indigenous peoples of the Americas are referred to as First Nations, Native Americans, aboriginal peoples of the Americas, autochthonous peoples of the Americas, Native American tribes, Amerindians, Mesoamerican Indians, Mesoamerican Indigenous people, Mesoamerican tribes, South American Indians, Latin American Indigenous people, Latin American *campesino*, Original people of the Americas, etc.

Historically, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were some combination of hunter-gatherers and farmers and aquaculturists. Most of them still maintain at least some of these cultural practices today. Many groups adopted mixed forms of farming, gathering and hunting. This is a similarity they all share. On the other hand, In some countries and regions, particularly in Latin America, Indigenous peoples built different kinds of monumental architectures, with well-structured cities in large empires. There are also differences in the way Indigenous peoples across the Americas communicate, given the use of a rich mosaic of Indigenous languages; they also possess different cultural and religious practices (music, dance, ceremony, etc.). Clothing, textile, art work, architecture and pottery are also indexes of identity that vary from context to context.

In fact, there are many Indigenous languages all over the Americas. Some Latin American countries such as Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil are populated by large numbers of Indigenous peoples who speak a wide repertoire of languages. Some of these languages are spoken by millions of Indigenous people, either as monolinguals, or as bilinguals (or multilinguals) of their native language and Spanish, and sometimes of other Indigenous languages as well. In other words, in some parts of Latin America, the Indigenous languages and cultures are relatively vital, but in other parts they are in the process of extinction due to social, political, psychological and economic factors. Unfortunately, in the United States, all the Indigenous languages and cultures are endangered.

In addition to this, in some countries of Latin America, there are Indigenous people in both urban and rural spaces because of internal migration in search of a better life. They do not live on reservations like in the United States. In recent years, due to transnational migration, Indigenous people of Latin America are crossing geographical and linguistic boundaries to travel around the world in search of better educational and job opportunities. Finally, the reemergence of Indigenous organizations and movements in Latin America is much more robust compared to the Native American ones.

What kinds of commonalities do you see with Indigenous peoples in North and South America?

The struggles to preserve our languages and cultures from total extinction are common themes. The European colonization and domination for centuries also share similar characteristics in North and South America. Besides, the linguistic and cultural discrimination because of competing ideologies and political manipulations promotes erasure and homogenization of Indigenous languages and cultures instead of promoting the preservation of the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the planet. A serious lack of support is also evident on the part of many administrations and politicians in power to multiply efforts to save Indigenous languages and cultures from caducity. In addition to this, the lack of articulation of efforts from top down and bottom up for the maintenance, development and revitalization of our cultural and linguistic legacy is fragile. The socioeconomic conditions and the lack of education

of Indigenous peoples in the North and South are equally deplorable. On top of all these, the linguistic, social and cultural capital of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas are not sufficiently valorized and recognized across time and space. These asymmetrical relationships of power will end up condemning Indigenous languages and cultures to extinction.

Being from Latin America, has the native North American experience influenced your way of thinking?

I do not understand why the majority of Native American Indians live on reservations isolated from the rest of American society. In Latin America, Indigenous people live wherever they want. The most traditional ones, especially elders, live in isolated Indigenous communities. Young people are the most mobile, and they are always looking for opportunities to change their lives for the better. At some point, I would like to live on a Native American reservation for awhile in order to learn more about the Native American sociolinguistic and sociocultural reality. My exposure to Native American languages and cultures is only through my readings and conversations with Indigenous colleagues, which, without doubt, is shaping my thinking regarding the situation of endangered languages and cultures around the world.

How do you make your research beneficial for your targeted communities?

I am in close contact with Indigenous leaders, activists, practitioners, linguists, and language planners devoted to the revitalization of languages and cultures. I share my work with them in conferences, workshops, and training sessions. In addition to this, I have created a comprehensive website that contains a wide variety of multimedia resources and pedagogical materials for teaching and learning the Indigenous languages of the Americas, particularly Quechua and Aymara. I have also developed a dictionary and a phrasebook, which have been used widely throughout the Andean region of South America. Further, I also translated into Quechua the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. These materials are practical and concrete examples for language revitalization.

In 2008, I played a leadership role in founding and forming a consortium composed of seven universities, whose first task was to plan and carry out the "First Biennial Symposium on Teaching Indigenous Languages of Latin America (STILLA)," which was co-convened by myself and my colleague Professor John H. McDowell, and organized by the Minority Languages

and Cultures of Latin American Program (MLCP) and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS). This symposium took place at Indiana University in Bloomington. STILLA 2008 engaged participants in a unique hemispheric dialogue that was promoted through active listening and discussion among professionals from around the world, together with leading experts in the fields of education, language policy and planning, theoretical linguistics, Latin American Studies, applied linguistics, ethnomusicology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and informatics, all devoted to the research and teaching of indigenous languages and cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean. Through multiple activities such as keynote addresses, special panels, videoconferences, interactive workshops, roundtable discussions, film screenings and musical performances, this symposium contributed to the teaching, learning, spread, maintenance, and revitalization of indigenous languages and cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean. One of the major outcomes of this event was the creation of the Association for Teaching and Learning Indigenous Languages of Latin America (ATLILLA). One of the intended purposes of ATLILLA will be to serve as a permanent forum for networking and exchanging ideas, experiences, and research on pedagogical, methodological and practical issues from cross-disciplinary perspectives nationally and internationally.

Are there funding resources that students should consider applying for, aside from the usual sources such as Wenner-Gren, Ford, and NSF?

These are some funding sources off the top of my head: Fulbright, AERA, Spen cer, Mellon Grant, AILDI, Endangered Language Fund, FLAS, Tinker Grant, Foundation for Endangered Languages, National Endowment for Humanities: Documenting Endangered Languages, Endangered Languages Project, Volkswagen Stiftung, FPHLCC Language Program Funding Calls, Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, Vancouver Foundation, The Healing Fund, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

How can students get more involved in NAIS?

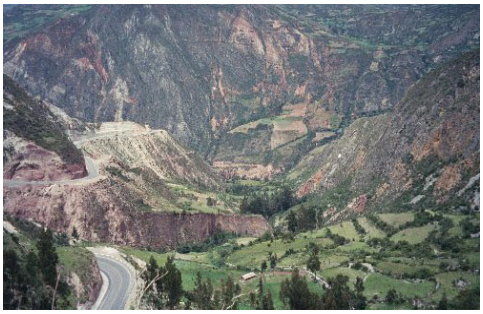
Obviously, the most effective way of getting involved in NAIS is choosing it as a minor. Then, they should share their positive experience in NAIS with their colleagues. Students can be powerful agents of recruitment. Another way for students to get involved in NAIS is through the organization of conferences, poster sessions, workshops, lectures and videoconferences, film festivals and cultural performances.

Why would you advise students to choose a NAIS minor? How does NAIS fit with the School of Education? How does it fit into other social sciences?

Since I am affiliated with several units at IU, I would like to advise doctoral students from the Arts and Sciences and from the School of Education to consider this NAIS minor. This can be of tremendous benefit, especially for doctoral students from the Department of Literacy, Culture and Language Education because of its interdisciplinary nature and its focus not only on Native American Indigenous Studies, but also on Indigenous Studies in the Americas. This minor needs more publicity so doctoral students from across campus can learn about it and hopefully decide to embrace it.

In my experience with American Indian Studies I see the minor somewhat different from other universities, but I don't have an authority to talk about it much. In your opinion, how is IU's NAIS different from other American Indian studies programs across North America? And does it make IU unique in that regard?

The NAIS minor at IU is part of the American Studies Program. Many other Canadian and American Universities already have well established Native



Studies Programs, where not only NAS minors are offered, but also Ph.D. degrees in NAS. Perhaps, in the future NAIS can become an independent program at IU. For more information about Native American Studies Programs in Canada and the United States, visit the following link: http://oncampus.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/guide/guide.html

Since we are discussing North and South American indigenous peoples, do they approach language revitalization similarly or do you observe many differences in their approaches? Are these differences (if any) geographically based or do they vary case by case?

I think the efforts on revitalization vary from context to context. For example, Latin American countries such as Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay, Guatemala and Mexico have millions of speakers of Indigenous languages such as Quechua, Guaraní, the Mayan languages and Nahuatl. In these cases, Intercultural Bilingual Education in Indigenous Languages and Spanish is promoted at the regional and national levels. Revitalization is carried out through the inclusion of native languages in elementary schools in territories where Indigenous languages are spoken. I am not completely sure if this is the case in the United States and Canada. As far as I know, there are immersion programs for indigenous peoples in North America. Also, the Master–Apprentice Language Learning Programs are quite popular in North America.

In short, there are many institutions and people involved in the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures in the Americas. There are also numerous efforts from the top down and bottom up that take into account the relationship among home, school and community. In other words, linguistic and cultural revitalization is being carried out from multiple angles by taking into consideration the intergenerational transmission of the native language and culture starting at home, then the implementation of language nests for language acquisition and literacy development at preschools, followed by maintenance bilingual education and biliteracy practices at diverse levels of education. In some cases, adult literacy will be necessary as well. In several places in North and South America, the users and owners of Indigenous languages are also trying to do their best to increase the functional domains of their languages at the societal level.

Can you tell me why you are invested in language revitalization?

I am invested in language revitalization because I believe it would be a great loss to humanity to reduce its linguistic and cultural diversity by so much. It is essential to multiply efforts from numerous fronts in order to save endangered languages and cultures around the world from extinction. It is also necessary to preserve and invigorate the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of the planet. In reality, it is difficult to determine the exact number of languages spoken worldwide, but according to some calculations, there are between 6,000 and 7,000 languages. Half of these world languages will be disappearing in the next century. This means that every two weeks one language dies. Unfortunately, many of the world's Indigenous languages are on the verge of extinction. As a native speaker of an endangered language of South America (Huanca Quechua), my main objective is to revitalize and document my native language for future generations. At the same time, I always raise cross-linguistic and cross-cultural awareness in an attempt to reverse this fatal trend.

When a language dies, its rich linguistic nuances and a big chunk of its culture will be gone forever. Each language possesses diverse local knowledge, wisdoms and practices such as natural medicine, artwork, architectural knowledge, ecological wisdom, weather and climate patterns, verbal art performances (narratives, rituals and ceremonies), colloquialisms, linguistic structure, pragmatic maneuverings, semantic manipulations, verbal repertoires, kinship terminologies, pitches, intonations, gestures, etc., etc. As languages die out, all of this is lost with them. And for me, that is a tragedy.

What do you want students to take away from from your classes?

My experiences have taught me about the power of education to open doors and minds and to stimulate both educators and learners. I feel successful as an educator when students tell me that through my classes, they "have learned to see the world through a new lens." I want my students to be aware of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity worldwide. I also want them to look at sociolinguistic, sociocultural and sociopolitical issues surrounding research and schooling from local and global perspectives.

Serafin, thank you for your time to share your experiences with us.

Conference

April 22-24th : The 11th Annual CIC - American Indian Studies Consortium Graduate Student Conference, hosted by the American Indian Studies Program at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48823,

Please email the electronic form to aisp@msu.edu.

Conference Schedule includes:

- Thursday April 22, 6 pm: Reception in the RCAH Look Out! Gallery
- Thursday April 22, 8 pm: The keynote address by Dr. Benjamin Ramirez-shkwegnaabi will be in the RCAH auditorium. Dr. Ramirez-shkwegnaabi's research centers on nineteenth-century Great Lakes Indian history. His specific areas of research include decision-making and gender issues with respect to treaty negotiations in the Great Lakes area. Professor Ramirez-shkwegnaabi also researches and teaches Ojibwe language classes. His research examines the intersection of Ojibwe language, history and culture.
- Friday April 23: Morning and afternoon paper presetations with box lunch provided
- Friday Banquet and special guests at the Nokomis Learning Center. Enjoy a dinner catered by Pii Lani Rupert (Native Hawaiian), followed by songs from Wabanaisee, the Snowbird Singers, a women's drum group from the Saginaw Chippewa Reservation.
- Saturday April 24: Morning paper presentation session, followed by closing lunch.

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