INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN PERU: SPECIALTY WITHOUT EXCLUSIVITY

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ABSTRACT: Peru's National Registry of Interpreters and Translators of Indigenous Languages (Registro Nacional de Intérpretes y Traductores de Lenguas Indígenas, ReNITLI) comprises more than 400 trained interpreter-translators offering services for healthcare, justice, education, and community consultations in 37 out of 48 Peruvian indigenous languages. This qualitative study details the work of ReNITLI members, asking where, in what contexts, and how often interpreter-translators provide their services. It was revealed that Registry members' work is heterogeneous in type (interpretation vs. translation), frequency, and especially specialization, demonstrating that the profile of a solely 'medical interpreter' or 'justice interpreter' does not exist in this context. This suggests that diverse perspectives and experiences widen the scope of interpreter-translators' practice, and that the utility of specializing in a particular area varies depending on context. Sharing the varied work of ReNITLI members underscores the importance of interpreter-translators and ensures the inclusivity and accessibility of public spaces in Peru.
KEYWORDS: Interpretation; Translation; Peru; ReNITLI; Specialization; Certification

1. Introduction and background

In multilingual spaces, the provision of public services is not always equitable. In healthcare, education, and justice systems, speakers of languages other than the primary language often encounter communication difficulties. Interpretation and translation—tools for spoken and written language, respectively, that facilitate the exchange not only of words, but also of ideas and perspectives—are indispensable to ensure that these communities have sufficient access to resources. With its rich linguistic and cultural diversity, Peru has a considerable population that must deal with such difficulties and therefore can benefit from strong interpretation and translation services. As such, it serves as a fascinating example for a study of interpretation and translation. The goal of this project was to explore the current landscape of translation and interpretation for indigenous languages in Peru, and to highlight government efforts to develop such supports.

In particular, this study focuses on the National Registry of Interpreters and Translators of Indigenous Languages (Registro Nacional de Intérpretes y Traductores de Lenguas Indígenas, ReNITLI). ReNITLI is an initiative headed by the Indigenous Languages Department of the Peruvian Ministry of Culture. This type of program is unique in Latin America; apart from a similar registry in Mexico—the Padrón Nacional de Intérpretes y Traductores en Lenguas Indígenas (PANITLI), whose inception in 2007 slightly predates ReNITLI—it is the main example of a national program recognizing the importance of supporting indigenous language speakers in such an intentional way (Stallaert et al., 2020). With more than 400 registered interpreter-translators, ReNITLI serves 37 of the 48

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recognized Peruvian indigenous languages and covers 23 of Peru's 24 regions (Oficina de Comunicación e Imagen Institucional, 2020; Chata Bejar, 2021). In addition, 2025 marks ten years since the Registry was officially created by Supreme Decree in 2015, and thirteen years since the idea first arose via a list of interpreter-translators prepared to work in Prior Consultation (*Consulta Previa*), Peru's system of convening indigenous communities and State or business entities in matters regarding them (Andrade et al., 2019). About a decade after the initial implementation of the concept, this is an opportune time to assess the efficacy of the Registry.

The initial goal of this project was to study ReNITLI with a particular focus on healthcare. This focus was based on two initial motivations: first, that interpretation constitutes an integral part of effective communication, which is critical in medical situations (Andrade and Pérez, 2013; Flores, 2005; Jacobs et al., 2001; Karliner et al., 2007). Of the numerous difficulties that indigenous communities face in seeking good medical care—including distance, finances, and negative perceptions of providers in state-run medical centers—language barriers are a significant challenge (Badanta et al., 2020; Bussalleu et al., 2021a, 2021b; Frisancho-Arroyo, 2013; Ishida et al., 2012).

Second, although previous research has established the critical importance of medical interpretation, much of the existing scholarship, especially in the Peruvian context, focuses more on interpreting and translation in the area of justice and legal matters. Findings from the present study thus expand our knowledge of interpretation and translation in other sectors. The study of ReNITLI as a unique government program also reinforces the utility of such initiatives in other multilingual regions, as it is a significant recognition and validation of indigenous language speakers' needs. To examine the impact of ReNITLI, this exploratory study employed a survey and qualitative interviews to investigate translation and interpretation services in various public spheres, as well as the individual experiences of interpreter-translators themselves.

Prior work on interpretation, particularly in the United States, generally centers on those interpreters who have specialized in a given area, such as medical interpreters, court interpreters, and the like. Researchers such as Kelly and Zetzsche, in their 2012 book *Found in Translation*, argue that to be able to manage the specific and often complex terminology and concepts of certain subjects, passing along messages as accurately as possible, interpreters need strong, specialized training in their particular field. This argument especially applies when considering how a setting like healthcare, in which conversations include body parts, scientific processes, and medical jargon, differs in such a stark manner from something like the justice system, which instead requires familiarity with court systems, legal proceedings, and lawyers' particular styles of speech.

Nevertheless, the preliminary survey of ReNITLI members in this investigation revealed something surprising: less than a fifth of respondents indicated that they interpret and translate for only one sector (in this paper, 'sector,' 'field,' and 'area' are used interchangeably to refer to a particular setting in which interpretation and translation are conducted). Because such experience with different fields appears to contradict the

idea that specialization produces better work, the fact that interpreter-translators in Peru generally do not specialize merits further study. It also urges us to take an inter-epistemic view of the issue, recognizing the value of knowledge systems outside of the Global North and the imperative to avoid an 'epistemological monoculture' (Bennett, 2015; Santos, 2016). This work thus aims to investigate how and why interpreter-translators in Peru provide their services in a variety of public spaces. With a more detailed portrait of how ReNITLI members operate, we can better understand Peru's provision of these important public services and potentially see a model for other multilingual spaces.

2. Methods

2.1 Survey and interviews

A Google Forms survey was created and sent out to interpreter-translators from an updated list of ReNITLI members in 2022, which was obtained thanks to a collaboration with the Indigenous Languages Department at the Ministry of Culture of Peru. The survey (see the full Spanish version in the Appendix) began with demographic questions addressing language, origin, age, current location, and occupation. It then asked about interpreter-translators' experiences: in what fields, with what frequency, and where specifically they had provided their services. Though the initial list contained 508 names, some did not provide email addresses and other email messages were returned to the sender. In total the survey was successfully emailed to 440 interpreter-translators. Of those, 144 submitted complete responses (response rate: 33%).

The survey results revealed that participant characteristics varied widely. They are originally from different regions of Peru and currently live all over the country, they speak different indigenous languages, they have different occupations, and they have had experiences with translation and interpretation in many different cases and fields. What they have in common, however, is that all were trained by the Ministry of Culture's official training course for interpreters and translators of indigenous languages. The second phase of the study aimed to explore this diversity through individual interviews. Thirty-five interviews were conducted in Spanish by the author over Zoom or telephone between April and June 2022, with each interview lasting between 15-75 minutes. A semi-structured interview guide was employed to learn more about the interpreter-translators' decisions to become certified as interpreter-translators, their experiences with interpretation and translation in general, their recommendations for ReNITLI, and their opinions about specialization.

With the verbal consent of participants, written transcripts of their responses were reviewed in greater detail in tandem with researcher notes taken during the interviews, with the goal of observing patterns in the interpreter-translators' perspectives and experiences.

2.2 Participants

In this study's sample, participants spoke more than 15 indigenous languages, a significant portion of the 37 that ReNITLI covers and the 48 that exist in Peru today (Oficina de Comunicación e Imagen Institucional, 2020; Chata Bejar, 2021). Figure 1 shows the distribution of these languages.

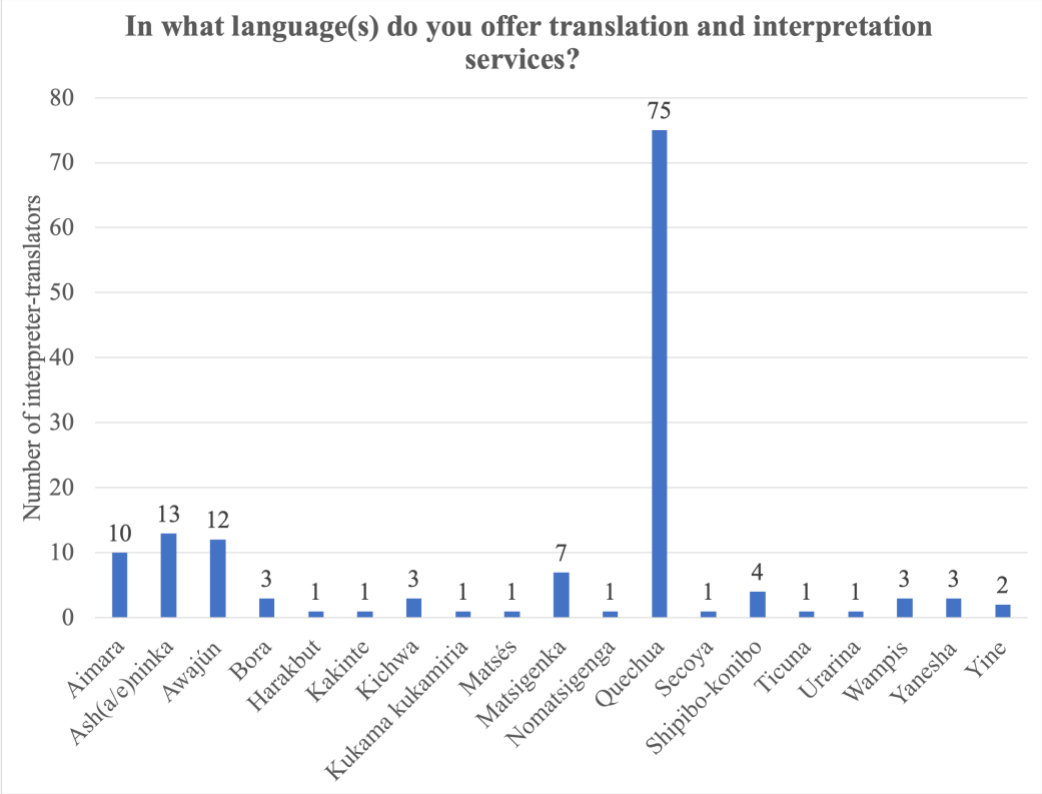

Figure 1. In what language(s) do you offer translation and interpretation services? Participants entered their language(s) in a short-answer format. Number of responses: 141.

Of the 144 survey participants, the great majority speak Quechua, including varieties such as Quechua Chanka, Cusco-Collao, Cajamarca norteño, and Kañaris-Inkawasi, among others. This is consistent with Peru's linguistic composition, as Quechua is the most spoken indigenous language in the country (Ministry of Culture of Peru, 2019). One participant mentioned interpreting and translating between Spanish and two indigenous languages, but the rest reported doing so only in one indigenous language.

The age range of participants was 23–76 years old (average: 44.6 years). The sample was 60.4% male. Participants were originally from 17 Peruvian states (including the Constitutional Province of Callao) and currently live in 20 states.

3. Results and Analysis

3.1 Survey results

Although the initial goal of this project was to study interpretation in healthcare specifically, the preliminary survey revealed that a uniform profile of a 'medical interpreter' does not exist. Rather, participants worked with both interpretation and

translation in multiple sectors. Additionally, one of the most important findings of this questionnaire was that the vast majority of respondents do not even work exclusively as interpreter-translators, as shown in Figure 2.

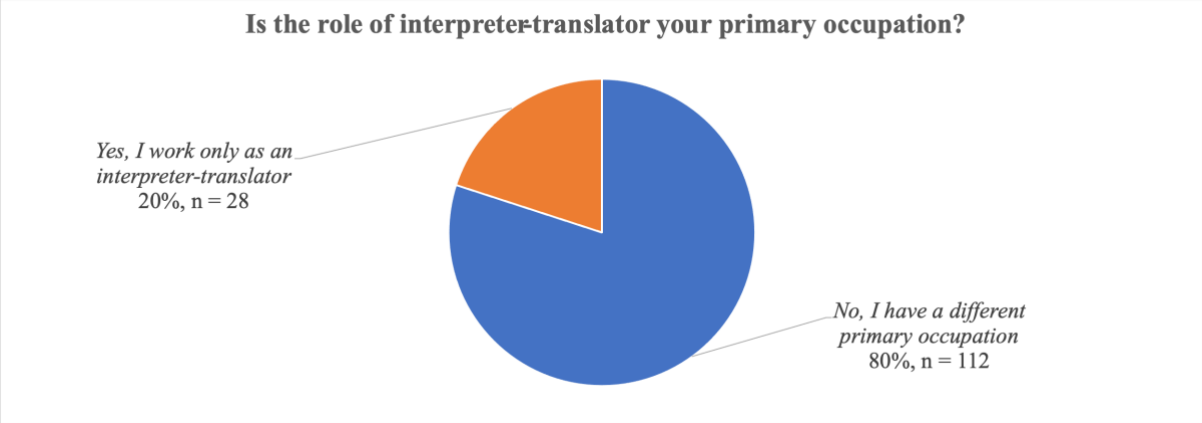

Figure 2. Is the role of interpreter-translator your primary occupation? Participants could select only one response. Number of responses: 140.

Instead, participants had a variety of other primary occupations: teachers, students, lawyers, writers, artists, public servants, independent workers, and more. The range of employment they display indicates that each interpreter-translator brings a distinct set of experiences and perspectives to their work. It also implies that they must find a balance between their responsibilities as interpreter-translators and the other roles they occupy, which suggests they have particular motivations to be in this role.

In agreement with the fact that the primary occupation of the interpreter-translators in this sample is not necessarily interpretation and translation, the majority reported interpreting only on an "occasional" basis, which was defined in this case as a frequency of less than once a month (see Figure 3). Less than 10% interpret "nearly all the time," and there was a notable portion who never interpret, focusing solely on translation of written material.

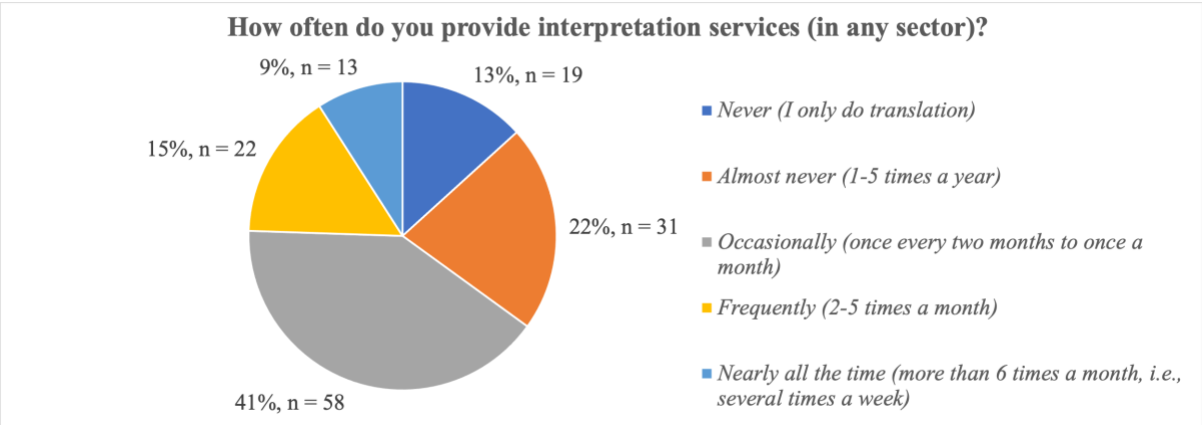

Figure 3. How often do you provide interpretation services (in any sector)? Participants could select only one response. Number of responses: 143.

This finding indicates that although ReNITLI members can opt to be certified both as interpreters *and* translators, there is not an even divide between these two forms of linguistic mediation. Thus, we find that in reality, the makeup of the work is heterogeneous both in type (interpretation versus translation) and frequency.

A related noteworthy result came up in responses to a question about the sector in which participants work most frequently. Of the 144 respondents, only 27—less than a fifth of the total—noted that they work in only one field. The rest reported having worked with multiple sectors, with the most commonly mentioned one being Education, followed by Healthcare, as shown in Figure 4.

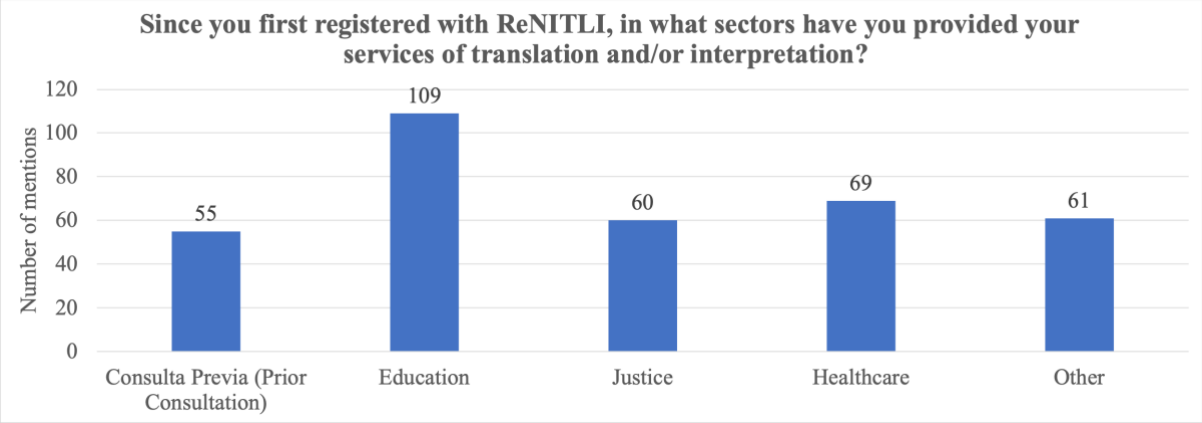

Figure 4. Since you first registered with ReNITLI, in what sectors have you provided your services of translation or interpretation? Participants could select as many answers as necessary, including an option of "Other." Bars represent the number of times that a given sector was mentioned across all responses. Some noted working with only one sector (*n* = 27, 18.8%), but the majority indicated more than one field in their responses.

This finding was interesting and unexpected, given that it contrasts with the previously mentioned notion that it is important to specialize in a particular field of translation and interpretation (Kelly and Zetzsche, 2012). Taking into account the fact that ReNITLI members tend not to dedicate themselves exclusively to the work of translation and interpretation, nor do they usually work exclusively with one topic, the main research question was reformulated; instead of exploring only healthcare interpreting, the study pivoted to the more general question of sector specialization in interpretation and translation.

3.2 Preparing for each sector

The 35 interpreter-translators who participated in interviews represented approximately a quarter of those who responded to the survey. Initially, only those participants who mentioned healthcare were going to be recruited through a follow-up email, but because fewer than expected had healthcare experience, a random set of respondents were asked to participate in interviews via email. Their occupations varied, but a notable proportion were teachers and lawyers. All had different levels of experience with translation and

interpretation, but in general, they reported feeling well-prepared by the Ministry of Culture's training course for interpreters and translators of indigenous languages. Despite the training, most also shared the opinion that one of the great challenges they face is the wide variety of terms and concepts they encounter which are unique to each sector; for example, translating a document about mining involves knowledge that is wholly distinct from that required to interpret in a court of law. To make the message understandable, or '*hacer entender*' as the interpreter-translators put it, they freely recognized the importance of understanding the content of each situation.

Nevertheless, they did not suggest that specialization in one sector is the solution to this problem. Rather, their strategy involves a concerted effort by each interpreter-translator to learn and practice the information necessary for each sector for which they are called to interpret or translate. They described several ways to accomplish this, from using Google, to reading books, to consulting colleagues. In each case, the underlying theme was that this additional effort is simply part of the role (quotes translated from the original Spanish by the author):

> I understand my career, which is law, and can translate or interpret legal terms, for example. But as an interpreter-translator, when I have to tackle medical terms, economic terms, educational terms, healthcare terms, it's not my language. That's a great challenge for an interpreter-translator, being able to understand […] and make an effort to approximate the message. (Interviewee 2)

> You have to specialize in healthcare, specialize in education, specialize in justice, because if you're just a general interpreter-translator, you practically don't know anything. You can do some general things, but it's not the same as having a specialty. Because a specialty isn't just terms, isn't just lexical items, it isn't just some nouns. It's technical terms and a language of its own. […] You have to know the basics, at least, to be able to understand what exactly it's about. (Interviewee 9)

> A challenge is continuing to get to know more fields, for example, healthcare and other areas. To continue improving knowledge and experiences, to keep helping more people who really need it. (Interviewee 18)

Another interpreter-translator also mentioned that she knowingly accepts translation or interpretation requests in sectors with which she has little familiarity, despite her self-acknowledged lack of experience. In this and the examples above, interpreter-translators reveal that it may be difficult to specialize, but it is even more difficult *not* to, if they want to be able to provide help in any case that arises. The willingness to spend so much time and energy on additional learning thus shows, one on hand, their dedication to the work. On the other hand, in a different interpretation of these findings, it may stem at least partly from the need to be gainfully employed. Though the economic remuneration for their work is not standard and often insubstantial, interpreter-translators are likely motivated to take advantage of any opportunities that do arise, regardless of topic, to be able to support themselves.

3.3 Specialization versus exclusivity

Though most of the interpreter-translators in this sample talked about specializing in the sense that they learn some about each sector, as above, there was a small number who supported the idea of specialization in just one area. In accordance with the idea that distinct terminology and concepts is one of the main challenges, these participants also mentioned that having an existing career in a given sector positively affects their work. In other words, having some kind of specialized training has advantages for interpretation and translation:

> In my case, I specialized in Justice. So you have to read books about Justice, get to know the laws, the terms. And, well, you have to specialize, right? Mining, healthcare, culture. You can't be an interpreter for everything. (Interviewee 16)

> If the work is in healthcare, I think it's much better if it's a nurse or a doctor. […] If not, you wouldn't have the same kind of theoretical foundation that a trained professional in that area would. For me it's much better to specialize and be sure of what you're doing, right? (Interviewee 26)

> Based on all the work I've done, I think we should specialize […] because there's so much to know, to study, lots of specialized terminology. […] If we're not from the field, we can do our research, but there are concepts that maybe we won't be able to understand as completely as if we were a specialist in that area, right? So then we maybe wouldn't produce a translation as rich or as detailed because we're not from that specialty. (Interviewee 35)

In the same way that a certification from the Ministry of Culture lends credibility to interpreter-translators in general, specialized training can give confidence to interpretation sessions and translated documents. In agreement with Kelly and Zetzsche (2012), these participants maintain that specialization—if it comes from a separate career or specialized courses—can improve the quality of individual interpretation sessions and translations.

But once again, though many interpreter-translators mentioned the potential difficulty of dealing with complex terms and concepts, they did not hesitate to comment that restricting oneself to one sector can be limiting:

> I think an interpreter should be multifaceted and not specialize in one sector because no one knows when or in what circumstances you'll be called upon for a particular job. (Interviewee 5)

> We should want to be trained in a diverse way. There may be calls for justice, politics, and healthcare, or maybe education, different specialties. Why? Because here they can call you and say "There's a case about deforestation, we need a translator," "We have a problem here, a girl has been raped, we need a translator," or "Here there are territory issues, we need a translator." […] That's why sometimes we have to be prepared to respond to the community's needs. (Interviewee 13)

> I'm a lawyer, but I don't just say "No, I'm a lawyer, I only do laws." […] All of us as interpreter-translators need to be able to do the work in whatever part of the community, according to the languages we speak, to have knowledge of everything, in global terms. […] You have to know about healthcare, education, basically everything. Why? Because every case that presents itself is different. (Interviewee 14)

> In healthcare, I'm there where they need me. In education, when they need me, I'm there too. They ask for a job in the justice system, I'm there. I've never denied a request; actually, I've liked being part of this team because I'm always learning, reflecting, strengthening myself in different areas like healthcare, education, justice, and everything else because I don't think we can close ourselves into just one space. (Interviewee 15)

> Personally, I'd like to be familiar with other areas, other sectors. Why? Because the requests come from one or another, and how can I say "I can't help you because I don't know the terminology in this area."? So you have to help for the good of our fellow speakers of indigenous languages, and I need to be prepared and I'm willing to do that. (Interviewee 23)

Each of these observations identifies the need to serve the community as paramount, noting that the added work of knowing each sector is an acceptable byproduct of that goal.

From both sides of this debate, we observe an interesting paradox: that specialization is important, but it can also be limiting. What emerged from further examination of this contradiction was a distinction between *specialization* and *exclusivity*. One must be familiar enough with a given sector to perform an adequate translation or interpretation, but if interpreter-translators are pigeonholed into only one area, they are unable to respond to the demand that currently exists. Grappling with this conflict, this group of interpreter-translators appeared to suggest that the solution is to get to know a few fields in greater detail—in other words, to have specialization without exclusivity. This interpreter-translator explained his ideal situation:

> In the short term, I think we should be familiar with all the sectors given that there's demand for it, right? […] Each interpreter-translator should learn on their own and familiarize themselves a little more to be able to respond to the work of different fields. Now, if we're talking about the long term, yes, I think translators and interpreters should specialize in a particular sector, whether it's healthcare, justice, education, I don't know, or any other sector, right? […] It's better to focus on one area and get to know it much more deeply, know what it means, what it implies, to work in that sector. (Interviewee 10)

With this suggestion, we can see that it would be ideal to have depth of training in one sector, but the current reality does not permit such limitation. This brings up a question for the future of ReNITLI: how can interpreter-translators be best prepared to provide the strongest services possible while responding to their communities' current, diverse needs?

To answer this question, it is important to keep in mind some of the Registry's greatest strengths. By officially certifying its interpreter-translators, ReNITLI gives an external endorsement to their work, a validation that they themselves explain is extremely useful for proving their credibility. Additionally, it provides them with an internal confidence not only that they have the tools necessary to interpret and translate, but also

that they are doing important work. In many cases, participants had previously done informal translations and/or interpretation, but with the certification, they feel even more prepared to help their communities. The fact that they had participated in this work before also reaffirms that it is not simply an occupation, but rather much more is involved: culture, identity, and protection of indigenous communities. Because of that, when we focus here on indigenous languages, we are only scratching the surface of a much larger issue. Discussions about such topics can help frame any changes that may come to ReNITLI in the future, ensuring it continues to accomplish the overarching goal of recognizing and serving indigenous language speakers.

3.4 Other important themes

In addition to the question of specialization, interpreter-translators brought up several other themes that demonstrate their commitment to serving indigenous communities. First, being people who generally come from the communities that speak these indigenous languages, they have a special relationship with those who receive their linguistic services, perhaps stronger than the relationship that would exist with a foreign, more widely spoken language. According to some members of this sample, their relationship with speakers of their language has changed because now, they feel even more connected to the language and the community. On the other hand, others expressed that no such change had taken place, as it was this existing connection which motivated them to get certified as interpreter-translators in the first place. In both cases, the role of interpreter-translator has a duality to it: the shared language marks them as members of the community, but they are at the same time separated from other speakers by their ability to navigate Spanish-speaking settings with greater ease. Knowing this aspect of the interpreter-translator's role, we can better acknowledge the level of effort required to create a trusting relationship with indigenous language speakers.

Related to the theme of trust, these interpreter-translators spoke of their experiences with interculturality, particularly in healthcare. One voiced the need to tackle this issue carefully, respecting cultural differences and ensuring that conflicting beliefs do not lead to poorer outcomes (e.g., in medical settings). Unlike translation and interpretation of more widely spoken foreign languages, a deep history of discrimination, lack of rights, and other considerations accompany indigenous populations in Peru (Andrade et al., 2018). Interpreter-translators sense this additional connection and many take on the role of advocate as a result, serving as representatives of their communities and languages. Calls for recognition of the importance of translation and interpretation, as well as the need to support rights of indigenous communities, thus came up frequently.

More than dedication to a given job, the choice to interpret and translate also demonstrates a dedication to indigenous communities as a whole. Translation and interpretation are a way to contribute to the larger issue of rights and well-being of these communities, so in this way, even if not voiced explicitly, they take on the role of community advocate as part of the role of interpreter-translator. It is important to note,

however, that such advocacy is a complicated concept. Previous study has shown that in Prior Consultation practices in Peru (*Consulta Previa*, the process of working with indigenous communities when a government or business endeavor will impact them), the fact that interpreter-translators are employed by the State causes some conflict between the parties involved (De Pedro Ricoy et al., 2018). Participants in the present study echoed the same issue, noting that some community members are wary of their association with the government or business enterprises. While interpreter-translators are clearly motivated to assist their communities, they must not alienate the opposing side by fighting too strongly for the indigenous community's interests. Additionally, although it is admirable to care deeply about access and inclusion, holding too strong of a position one way or the other is also at odds with the idea of neutrality in translation and interpretation, which is a complicated facet of the field. It is this struggle for neutrality, a still-unsettled debate in translation and interpretation, which is an added challenge for interpreter-translators. Further work is needed to characterize the careful balance between supporting the communities and transmitting messages impartially.

4. Discussion and conclusions

4.1 Paradoxes and suggestions

As a resource that provides official credentials to people who have a passion for serving indigenous communities, ReNITLI is an essential initiative. These conversations with interpreter-translators themselves have given a more detailed view of the current state of the Registry, showing that the profile of an interpreter-translator specialized in only one area does not necessarily exist as in other communities, and also that interpreter-translators themselves see ReNITLI as an extremely important resource.

This study also revealed some interesting paradoxes, the most important being that interpreter-translators should have a certain degree of specialized knowledge, but not limit that knowledge to only one sector. Another fascinating paradox lies in the relationship between the demand and provision of linguistic services. Although participants emphasized the great need for these services, the survey and interviews also showed that the majority do not interpret and translate very frequently. Perhaps the lower volume of requests for services is due to the public's lack of awareness, either about interpretation and translation generally or about the Registry specifically; some said that the institutions they work with (e.g., hospitals, courts, schools, businesses) are familiar with and value their work, while others said the opposite. It could also be related to time limitations based on their personal schedules, as taking on translation and interpretation may take time away from other pastimes and responsibilities. But the urge to underline the importance of their work may stem from a deeper lack of awareness of the needs of indigenous communities. The fact that some feel that their efforts are underappreciated indicates that there is more work to be done to place appropriate value on their work.

In addition to educating people in general about interpreter-translators, participants had some other suggestions about how to accomplish this, as well as how to improve the

Registry. First, many agreed that more specialized training courses would be useful. In addition to the initial basic course, one or two of these courses already exist, but providing further opportunities to expand knowledge in different sectors (as well as providing follow-up instruction over time) would facilitate the aspect of the role that requires preparation for a variety of situations. By learning a bit of everything at the beginning, and then continuing to be involved in classes as several participants suggested, they could spend more energy on each individual situation rather than reviewing a new topic each time a solicitation comes up from an unfamiliar field.

Another suggestion was to have expert interpreter-translators serve as teachers for the Ministry's training course, which is currently taught by people who are not necessarily themselves speakers of an indigenous language. Participants mentioned that they learned a great deal from the course and generally felt prepared, but also that it would have been even more helpful to learn from people who really understand the job from personal experience. With more than 400 certified interpreter-translators to date, students from previous iterations of the course could come back as teachers, providing feedback beyond just general strategies and advice on language-specific challenges. Sharing their experiences would allow new interpretation-translation students to learn from real examples and improve their language skills under the tutelage of fellow speakers.

4.2 Study limitations and future directions

This study has presented a clearer panorama of the current work of interpreter-translators certified by the Ministry of Culture. However, we must acknowledge some limitations of this study and recognize that there is much further work to be done. It was not possible to contact all members of ReNITLI, so this sample does not include all languages nor all regions of Peru. With the diversity that was observed among participants, it is important to recognize that individual experiences depend on the language and the person, and conclusions here may not apply equally in all cases of interpretation and translation.

Additionally, as an exploratory study, this survey asked about frequency of interpretation and translation in general terms, using terms like 'occasionally' or 'rarely.' It would be useful to have a detailed database of all the instances of interpretation and translation in which ReNITLI members have participated to be able to describe the current provision of services with more detail. It may benefit the Ministry of Culture and Department of Indigenous Languages to conduct a future study that creates such a database so as to keep up to date with the actual demand for interpreter-translators' work.

Such a database could also shed light on the topic of compensation for interpreter-translators, which came up in some of the interviews. Each job pays differently, and some participants even mentioned cases of working completely for free just to fulfill the need. The unpredictability of payment makes it difficult for interpreter-translators to support themselves only through interpretation and translation. Assessing current trends in payment and then setting standards for how each translation or session of interpretation

should be remunerated may help make the role more secure and retain interpreter-translators in the long term.

While there are areas for improvement, as is true for any initiative in its development, it is essential to underscore the tremendous impact that ReNITLI has had on indigenous languages. With its official training, system of solicitations, and provision of important linguistic supports, ReNITLI can serve as a model for multilingual spaces even outside of Peru. Further projects might focus on differences between languages and regions, or interpreter-translators over time.

4.3 Conclusions

This project has shown that ReNITLI and its members are actively fighting for linguistic accessibility in public spaces in Peru, recognizing and corroborating prior work arguing that indigenous communities deserve the same opportunities as their Spanish-speaking counterparts (Howard et al., 2018). It is important to review initiatives like ReNITLI every so often to ensure that they are serving these communities in the intended way.

But ReNITLI is just one way to guarantee equitable provision of services; in reality, there are other steps that can and should be taken to accompany ReNITLI. The Ministry of Culture's SINEACE program, which certifies bilingual public servants in both Spanish and their indigenous languages, is a good example of another initiative that can make the public sphere more accessible to speakers of these languages (SINEACE, no date). Creating resources in indigenous languages to begin with—assuring that they are not only intelligible but easily accessible—is another way to make sure the communities are not excluded (Flood and Rohloff, 2018). For example, there are already many YouTube videos in indigenous languages, directed to both the communities and those who provide services to them. A few particularly relevant examples are videos that explained the COVID-19 pandemic in Quechua to laypeople (Roca Aguilar, 2020a; FUNPROEIB Andes, 2020; Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2020) and others that instruct medical professionals on how to care for Quechua speakers (Roca Aguilar, 2020b). Making information available through informal means like social media, radio, and television complements the more formal efforts established by the State.

One further suggestion relates to the wider topic of dealing with cultural barriers while training public sector professionals. In healthcare, for example, trainees are not necessarily taught how to care for indigenous communities (Bendezu-Quispe et al., 2020). In the justice system, too, students do not always learn how best to work with these communities (Kleinert et al., 2019). In both cases, it is important to foster knowledge and cultural competency to be able to better understand the unique problems indigenous communities face and, further, combat the negative consequences associated with these problems (Castro et al., 2015; Badanta et al., 2020).

In an ideal world, all professionals would be multilingual and multicultural, allowing them to assist anyone who comes in. To that end, there are some efforts to teach the most widely spoken indigenous languages to public servants, including doctors in particular

(Shimabuku Azato et al., 2018; Santos-Revilla, 2016). While this would ideally create more comfortable spaces for indigenous language speakers, it would be quite difficult to achieve sufficient proficiency if learning the language from scratch. With the number and diversity of languages that exist in Peru, it would be extremely challenging for individual providers to become familiar with even a minority of these languages. Additionally, although a push to increase providers' linguistic skills may be well-intentioned, shifting the responsibility away from interpreter-translators might affect them negatively.

This study is a dual example of inter-epistemic diversity. First, we demonstrate that translation practices differ in different communities, namely the U.S. and Peru. Second, we recognize the inherent dynamic between Spanish as an imperial and primary language and indigenous communities' languages. In the former case, by presenting the work of ReNITLI, we underline that varying ways of organizing knowledge (in this example, specializing versus not) have different strengths. In the latter, we point out that recognizing bilingual interpreter-translators with an official certification validates their unique knowledge and experience of the world. Such acknowledgments highlight the importance of learning from other epistemic viewpoints, reinforcing the importance of an 'ecology of knowledges' (Santos, 2008, 2016; Bennett, 2024).

With their training and disposition to help, the work of interpreters and translators through ReNITLI will continue to be indispensable in public spaces. The results of this study—in particular, understanding how interpreter-translators distribute their services and how strongly motivated they are to serve their communities—contribute to the effort to improve linguistic services for speakers of indigenous languages in Peru, with important implications for lesser-spoken languages in other regions, as well.

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APPENDIX

Preliminary survey for ReNITLI members (Spanish version)

Recojo de datos sobre la interpretación y traducción en el sector Salud

Muchas gracias por tomarse el tiempo de llenar esta encuesta. El propósito de estas preguntas es recopilar información acerca de la interpretación y traducción en el sector Salud en el Perú.

Esta encuesta forma parte de un proyecto de investigación realizado en coordinación con el Departamento de Humanidades en la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. El proyecto es apoyado por una beca Fulbright y hecho con el conocimiento de la Dirección de Lenguas Indígenas del Ministerio de Cultura.

Sus respuestas son voluntarias y puede dejar el espacio en blanco si no quiere contestar a una pregunta en particular.

Si usted tiene cualquier consulta o comentario, puede contactar a la investigadora, Julie Wechsler, por correo electrónico: jrwechsl@gmail.com. Gracias una vez más.

1. Nombre(s)

_____

2. Apellidos

_____

3. Correo electrónico

_____

4. ¿Cuántos años tiene usted?

_____

5. ¿Cuál es su sexo?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ◯ Hombre
- ◯ Mujer
- ◯ Prefiero no decirlo
- ◯ Otros: _____

6. ¿Dónde nació? (distrito, provincia, departamento)

_____

7. ¿Dónde vive usted actualmente? (distrito, provincia, departamento)

_____

8. ¿Qué lenguas habla usted? (por favor, escriba una lista separada con comas, como en este ejemplo: castellano, quechua, ashaninka...)

_____

9. ¿En qué lenguas ofrece usted servicios de traducción o interpretación? (por ejemplo, quechua-castellano)

_____

10. ¿Usted trabaja principalmente como intérprete-traductor o tiene otra ocupación laboral?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ◯ Sí, solo trabajo como intérprete-traductor
- ◯ No, tengo otra ocupación laboral

11. Si en la pregunta anterior usted respondió: "No, tengo otra ocupación laboral", por favor, diga cuál es su otra ocupación.

_____

12. Desde su ingreso al Registro, ¿en qué sectores ha brindado alguna vez sus servicios de traducción o interpretación? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que apliquen:

Selecciona todas las opciones que correspondan.

- ☐ Consulta Previa
- ☐ Justicia
- ☐ Salud
- ☐ Educación
- ☐ Otros: _____

13. Si en la pregunta anterior usted ha marcado más de un sector, por favor indique con cuál trabaja con mayor frecuencia (marque una sola opción).

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ◯ Consulta Previa
- ◯ Justicia
- ◯ Salud
- ◯ Educación
- ◯ Otros: _____

14. ¿Con qué frecuencia presta sus servicios de interpretación (en cualquier sector)?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ◯ Nunca (solo hago traducción)
- ◯ Casi nunca (de una a cinco veces al año)
- ◯ Ocasionalmente (una vez cada dos meses hasta una vez al mes)
- ◯ Frecuentemente (dos a cinco veces al mes)
- ◯ Casi todo el tiempo (más de seis veces al mes, es decir, varias veces cada semana)

15. ¿Con qué frecuencia presta sus servicios de interpretación en un caso relacionado con la salud (visitas en hospitales, postas de salud, etcétera)?

Marca solo un óvalo.

- ◯ Nunca trabajo con casos de salud
- ◯ Casi nunca (de una a cinco veces al año)
- ◯ Ocasionalmente (una vez cada dos meses hasta una vez al mes)
- ◯ Frecuentemente (dos a cinco veces al mes)
- ◯ Casi todo el tiempo (más de seis veces al mes, es decir, varias veces cada semana)

16. ¿Dónde presta sus servicios? Por favor, marque todas las opciones que apliquen:

Selecciona todas las opciones que correspondan.

- ☐ Hospital
- ☐ Clínica
- ☐ Posta médica
- ☐ Otros: _____

¡Muchas gracias por su tiempo!

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