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Reflecting social bilingualism in film. On Kichwa fragments in Ecuadorian cinema

Abstract: In this chapter, the use of Kichwa fragments in the Ecuadorian films *Ayllu*, *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*, *Feriado* and *Qué tan lejos* is analysed with focus on the topic of presentation modes (e.g. with or without subtitles, monolingual and bilingual dialogues) and their poetic functions. The fragments reflect the sizable social gap between indigenous and mestizo culture in the small Andean country.

While films produced in the Andean highlands of Ecuador featured the Kichwa language through short fragments, the main language of bigger productions had always been Spanish. The break of this long-standing tradition took place in the long film *Killa* by Alberto Muenala (2017) which contained larger parts in Kichwa. One entry point to bigger parts of Kichwa language are some short films produced in the region of Imbabura where the indigenous language is still widely spoken. This will be illustrated by the short film *Ayllu* (2010). Additionally, three masterpieces of Ecuadorian cinema will be discussed in this chapter: *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* (1996), *Feriado* (2014) and *Qué tan lejos* (2006). Although it is possible to see the reason for this choice in the importance of these films, as they all have an international reputation, it is significant to mention that the list of potential films is relatively short, as the centre of Ecuadorian film production is nowadays in Guayaquil, i.e. on the coastal portion of Ecuador where indigenous languages are not present in everyday life.

Central questions of this chapter concern the functionality of Kichwa fragments in films for mostly Spanish-speaking audiences and the functions they fulfil in different contexts. The perspective of this chapter is principally situated in the field of linguistics, where film analysis has not been an established approach so far.¹ Some words about the status of Kichwa language and identity in the Ecuadorian society may precede these

1 Cf. Schrader-Kniffki (2017: 43): “Mainly from a media studies and even applied media studies perspective [...], but hardly from a linguistic point of view – in

discussions, as social bilingualism has to be pointed out as one central aspect of the use of Kichwa fragments in films.

Kichwa in the national identity of Ecuador

Kichwa can be seen with different spellings and pronunciations, as there are different varieties currently in use. The most common name of *quechua* refers as a whole to the Inca descendent language that is spoken from the north of Argentina to the south of Colombia. *Quichua* instead refers to the variety spoken in Ecuador. The different vowel is explainable by the fact that in most varieties the first consonant is pronounced as a uvular plosive [q] that produces a transformation of the vocalic phonemes /i/ and /u/ to the allophones [e] and [o]. In Ecuador, the distinction of uvular and velar articulation disappeared towards velar /k/ so that there are no longer these allophones: ['q^hefʃwa] vs. ['kifʃwa]. *Quechua* and *quichua* correspond to Spanish writing conventions which are especially problematic for the distinction of different plosive sounds. In the last decades new writing conventions emerged and have become more common in present day. Whereas the southern forms of *qhechwa* or *qhichwa* are rarely adapted in other languages, the Ecuadorian spelling *kichwa* has become the customary form in all official Spanish (!) documents. Therefore, we will use here a modern writing of *Kichwa* in English as well.

It is helpful to know that in all varieties it is often more common to name the language as *runa simi* or *runa shimi*. Basically translated, this means 'language of humans', but the word *runa* is in most cases restricted to indigenous people. We will see in this chapter that the distinction between *runa* and *mishu* ('mestizo') is crucial in Kichwa language and in the creation of identity in Kichwa culture.

Starting from the independence era of Ecuador between 1809 and 1830, the creation of a national identity became a central thematic concern of Ecuadorian intellectuals. One famous example from the first generation born in Ecuador is Juan León Mera (1832–1894), the creator of the national anthem *¡Salve, oh Patria!* and the national epos *Cumandá*, who

Spanish and Portuguese film theory and analysis the notions 'film text' and 'textual analysis' are also being used [...]."

refused – as many others – to admit any cultural roots in Europe. However, the Spanish language was never placed in question, whereas Mera even wrote in 1860: “a la vuelta de un siglo [el quechua] será lengua muerta que nadie tratará de aprender”² (Paladines Escudero 2011: 73). The creation of Ecuadorian identity as an act of independence from Europe did not lead to indigenous culture, but rather to a kind of artificial romanticism of the pre-Columbian time.

In a short period of time in the 20th century, the *indigenismo* movement rediscovered indigenous languages and cultures. The most famous representative is the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas (1911–1969). For Ecuador, Jorge Icaza (1906–1978) has to be mentioned with his novel *Huasipungo* from 1934, a text full of Kichwa elements, yet well readable thanks to annotated editions (cf. Icaza 2005). The *indigenismo* movement remained without successors, which Jorge Enrique Adoum expressed on the cusp of the 21st century as a paradox of national identity: “Los intelectuales [...] proclamamos, por todas partes y a gritos, la originalidad de nuestro continente mestizo, [...] pero raros son los que han aprendido alguna lengua aborigen”³ (Adoum 2000: 40).

Nevertheless, Kichwa is nowadays enjoying a relatively stable status. The language shift from the indigenous languages to Spanish, which had been rising due to wider school placement in the entire country since the second half of 20th century, could partially be halted thanks to the realisation of Bilingual Intercultural Education (*Educación Intercultural Bilingüe*), i.e. the promotion of indigenous languages and cultures in school. Among the 14 official languages of Ecuador, Kichwa has obtained an outstanding position in academic education because basic knowledge of the language is now required in various careers, not only in special fields like anthropology, but also in study programmes for future teachers. This means that Kichwa is no longer only transmitted in natural acquisition, but formally studied by the mestizo population. In addition, more and more academic

2 “within one century [Quechua] will be a dead language that nobody wants to learn.”

3 “We intellectuals [...] proclaim, everywhere and full-throated, the originality of our mestizo continent, [...] but rare are those who have learnt any aboriginal language.”

theses are written in Kichwa, which is explainable by the higher percentage of indigenous people reaching academic graduations and the increase of the so-called “*intelectuales bilingües*” (Cerrón-Palomino 2007: 24). The status of diglossia with Kichwa as low variety that is most exclusively used by indigenous people (*runakuna*) persists, as we will see in the following examples of Kichwa use in films.

The bilingual short film *Ayllu*

Before analysing Kichwa fragments in long films, we will take a look at one example of the genre of bilingual short films, which are mainly produced in the northern highland region of Imbabura. The short film *Ayllu* (‘Family’, 2010), directed by José Espinosa, contains several scenes in Kichwa mixed in Spanish. It would not be adequate to call these scenes ‘fragments’ as they are an essential part of the entire film text. As Kichwa parts are subtitled into Spanish, Spanish can still be seen as the matrix language and Kichwa as the embedded language.⁴

In less than 20 minutes, the film deals with a young man named Yauri, who owns a clothing shop in a small town, and his girlfriend Sisa, who leaves the town because she gets a grant to study in an English college. In short scenes, their fading relationship is depicted until at the end Yauri leaves his hometown as well. Their life in the town is bilingual. Based on all scenes of the short film, we can deduce the following linguistic sociogram:

Two scenes show Yauri in selling interactions, once in Spanish (00:02:07–00:02:22) and once in Kichwa (00:13:45–00:14:03), depending on the customer. With the employees of the shop, Yauri speaks in Spanish. His mother represents the older monolingual Kichwa-speaking generation, as all people talk to her exclusively in Kichwa. The couple Yauri and Sisa, representing the younger generation, uses both languages as we see in the following mobile phone call:⁵

4 For this terminology, cf. Helmich (2016: 20).

5 The following examples are transcriptions of the spoken text, combined with given subtitles and/or translations. As the focus is on language choice, the transcription of spoken language is not marked with prosodic elements etc. in favour of a higher readability. Only pause and comment symbols are applied from the transcription system GAT2 (cf. Selting et al. 2009):

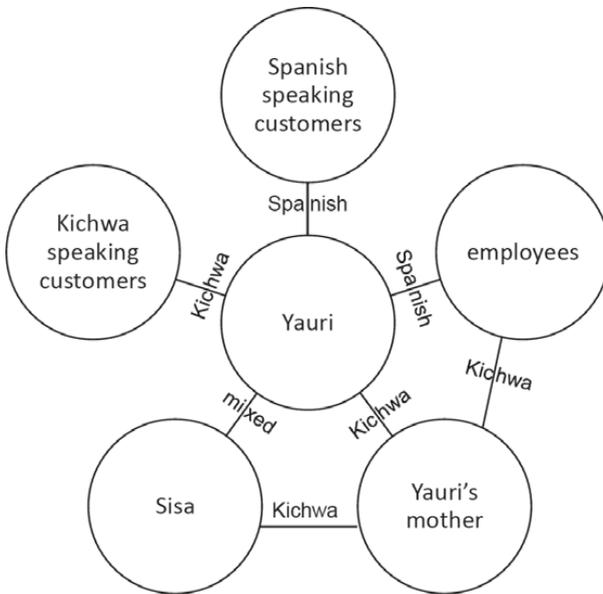


Figure 1. Sociogram of language use in *Ayllu*

(1)

Sisa: Aló.⁶ (1.9) Hola. (1.7) Allilla,(---)kikinka?(7.3) Ishkantilla? (3.5)
 subtitles: muy bien ¿y tú? ¿solo los dos?
 translation: Hallo. Hallo. Very good, and you? Only us two?

Sisa: Hmm. (1.0) Clases⁷ tukurikpi rikurishun. (1.6)
 subtitles: no[s] encontramos despu[é]s que termine clases
 translation: Hmm. Let's meet after I finish classes.

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- (.) – micro-stop,
 (-) (--) (---) – estimated breaks of <0.5, <0.8 and <1.0 second,
 (1.9) – measured breaks in seconds,
 ((...)) – comment.

For the review of the Kichwa fragments, I thank to Josefina Aguilar Guamán from the Universidad Nacional de Educación in Azogues, Cañar.

- 6 Aló is a typical contesting marker for telephone calls in South American Spanish.
 7 Some Spanish words in Kichwa may surprise. Due to the permanent contact there is, however, a high grade of “borrowability” (cf. Muysken & Muntendam 2016: 609).

Sisa: Ya. (-) Un besito. (-) Chao chao.
translation: Well. A kiss. Bye bye.
 (00:02:36-00:03:04)

The mobile phone call is related to modern society. Therefore, the frames of greetings both at the beginning and at the end are Spanish. The rest of the conversation – here only perceived through one interlocutor – is in Kichwa. In conclusion, we can say that this short film gives an interesting insight in the bilingual Ecuador in times of intergenerational language shift.

Kichwa fragments in three long films

As mentioned in the introduction, the following three films had great success, even internationally, although they were not dubbed. The use of Kichwa, in all three cases, is very limited, and as a result, we will include almost all the Kichwa fragments in our analysis.

Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda

The film *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* ('Between Marx and a Naked Woman', 1996), directed by Camilo Luzuriaga, is based on the eponymous novel by Jorge Enrique Adoum which was published in 1976 (cf. Koch 2013: 130). Both novel and film deal with the activity of the Communist Party in the time of dictatorships during the 1960s. Beside Kichwa, the film also contains subtitled fragments in Russian by a Soviet party member, and German when Karl Marx appears in imaginary scenes. Kichwa is used several times in an episode between 00:41:26 and 00:49:50 when the party members visit an indigenous community to promote the communist programme. One member of the group has indigenous roots and warns the others about their visit to the community as this one is celebrating a traditional festival that should not be disturbed (00:34:10–00:34:45). However, the political leader Galo Gálvez goes there with his group. On the train, the indigenous people reject political flyers shouting "mana, mana, mana!" ('no, no, no!', 00:41:26–00:41:41).

The first real interaction occurs between Galo Gálvez, who is confined to a wheelchair, and a man in disguise as an ancient dancing divinity:

(2)

dancer: Asinchi mashu, (-- tushuy! (---)

subtitles: ¡Levántate, hombre y baila!

translation: Stand up, man, and dance!

Galo: No tengo piernas. (1.4)

translation: I have no legs.

dancer: Ama shinaka⁸, (---) shinaka manachu tushuyta ushanki.

subtitles: Entonces no puedes bailar.

translation: So you cannot dance.

(00:46:50-00:47:09)

This dialogue itself is multilingual although the interlocutors only produce monolingual utterances. Yet as their logical reactions show, they apparently understand each other. In the following example Galo meets inhabitants of the community:

(3)

Galo: Buenos días, compañeros. (-) Muy buenas. (-)

translation: Good morning, comrades. Morning.

inhabitant 1: Achkaymanta.

subtitles: ¡Tienen que irse!

translation: You have to leave!

Galo: Miren, compañero, (1.4)

translation: Look, comrade,

nosotros hemos venido a hablar con ustedes. (-)

we came to talk to you.

inhabitant 2: Markamanta mishu kawsakkuna (-)

subtitles: Las autoridades del pueblo

translation: The authorities of the village

kankuna nishkankichik cubano, (--)

han dicho que ustedes son cubanos

have said that you are Cubans,

kankuna daño rurankapak shamun. (---)

ustedes han venido a hacernos daño.

you have come to inflict damage on us.

8 This element does not appear in the subtitle and can be translated as ‘not so’, maybe parallel to the typical marker *no pues* in Ecuadorian Spanish.

Galo: ¡Qué pena! (1.3) ¿Cómo pueden creer

translation: *What a pity! How can you believe*

que le vamos a hacer daño en nombre de Cuba? (-)

that we are going to inflict damage on you in the name of Cuba.

indigenous party member: Creo que mejor nos vamos, compañero Galo.

translation: *I think we better leave, comrade Galo.*

(00:48:27-00:48:53)

The style of asymmetric bilingualism with mutual intelligibility in both examples seems to be artificial, based on a written script that does not imitate authentic orality.⁹ The only person who speaks actively in both languages is the indigenous party member. He tries to stop the angry inhabitants who throw stones while screaming “llukshi!” (‘leave!’) with the words “saki, mashikuna, saki!” (‘stop, friends, stop!’, 00:49:50). This form of balanced bilingualism shows his function as a mediator between the languages and cultures. Except for him, the multilingual constellation of Kichwa and Spanish represents a clear social gap that does not only separate indigenous and mestizo populations, but also reflects the question of whether the socialist or communist ideology is compatible to the Andean world-view.

Feriado

Feriado (‘Holiday’, 2014), directed by Diego Araujo, is known as the first Ecuadorian film that discusses a LGBT-related subject: Juan Pablo (called Juampi) is an adolescent boy from a prosperous family from Quito who is visiting his relatives in the countryside. The girls of the region are interested in him, but he does not reply to their advances. He feels more attracted to the young man Juan Pablo (called Juano) and they timidly approach to each other. Whereas the allusion of gay love remains an intimate conflict between the two guys, there is another open conflict that concerns Juampi’s uncle, a banker who appears in front of the indigenous people to

9 Cf. the remark of Bedijs (2017: 136): “Authentic orality means that a speech act is conceived and orally performed by the same person, without being scripted beforehand.”

account for and explain the loss of their money during the financial crisis of 1999. Two scenes contain Kichwa elements that are not subtitled. We will not discuss the second scene where Byron¹⁰ talks to his relative Juano in Kichwa and Juano tries to calm him in Spanish (00:47:10–00:48:00), as the way of communication resembles the first scene where Mamá Rosa, another member of the indigenous community, interviews Juampi while Juano helps out as an interpreter:

(4)

Mamá Rosa: Juanito, pipak familiakunata. (2.2)

*translation: Juanito, from which family is he?*¹¹

Juano: Sí, mamá Rosa, es familiar de don Jorge. (---)

subtitle: -Yes, Mama Rosa, he's a relative of Don Jorge.

Mamá Rosa: Hmm. (20.3) Y usted, ¿hijo de quién es? (---)

subtitle: -And your dad is...?

Juan Pablo: Mi papá es Pablo. (-)

subtitle: -My dad is Pablo.

Mamá Rosa: Ah. (---) Pablo Victoriano uchillakuna kakpi riksirkani. (-)

translation: Ah. I have known Pablo Victoriano since we were small.

Kikipa abuelowan trabajashpa kawsarkani. (1.1)

I was working for your grandfather.

Unay watata, (---)

One year some time ago,

chay trabajashka kullkita rirkani kay don Jorgepa (---)

with the money from the work I went to this Don Jorge's

bankupi sakinkapak. (1.4)

bank to deposit it there.

Eh, (-) ña tigrachiwarka quidarka kullki chaypi. (1.1)

Eh, then they did not return, but kept the money there.

10 It is not uncommon – even in indigenous families – that children get English names.

11 In the published English subtitles, that we use here, they write: “Juanito...? (In Quichua)”. The following Kichwa utterances have only the subtitle “(In Quichua)”.

Juano: Lo que pasa es que mamá Rosa tenía unos ahorros
 subtitle: *-Mama Rosa had her money*
 en el banco de tu tío, (--)
in your uncle's bank
 y ahora con lo que han quebrado, (-)
and now that it went broke,
 le han dicho que no le van a devolver nada, ¿no ve? (1.3)
they ain't gonna give her no money.

Mamá Rosa: Payka allí wamrakumi rikurin. (--)
 translation: *He looks like a good boy.*

Juano: Dice que pareces una buena persona. (1.2)
 subtitle: *-She says you seem like a good person.*

Mamá Rosa: Ñawipash taytalla ñawikuta rikukun. (1.7)
 translation: *And the eyes looks like his father's eyes.*

Juano: Y que pareces a tu papá de joven. (1.2)
 subtitle: *-And you look like your dad when he was young.*

Mamá Rosa: Kuyaylla ñawikuta charin. (---)
 translation: *He has pretty eyes.*

Juano: Que tienes unos ojos bonitos.
 subtitle: *-And that you have pretty eyes...*

El Pichi: ¡Ese man! (--); Déjate de mariconadas!
 subtitle: *-Easy, Juano, stop being such a sissy.*

((El Pichi and Mamá Rosa laugh.))
 (00:26:20-00:27:48)

Compared to the previous examples from *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*, this fragment appears more authentic because the conversational situation is realistic: Juampi does not understand any Kichwa and Juano must translate for him. Juano understands Kichwa, but does not speak it actively. Mamá Rosa speaks a few words in Spanish and understands it without problem, which becomes quite clear when she laughs at the end about El Pichi's comment on "mariconadas".¹² This comment breaks from the idea

12 The word *mariconada* would usually be translated as 'nonsense' or 'bullshit'. In this case, it refers particularly to the homosexual allusion when Juano speaks about Juampi's pretty eyes (*maricón* – 'gay').

Table 1. Language dominance of bilingual characters in *Feriado*

	First bilingual generation	Second bilingual generation
Spanish	- Mamá Rosa Byron	+ Juano
Kichwa	+	-

of the interpreter as a neutral person. According to El Pichi the words of Mamá Rosa change their meaning when Juano pronounces them.

For the dominance or preference of one language in bilinguals in inter-generational shift, a model of Thomas Stehl (2012: 117) can be applied to the bilingual characters in *Feriado* (see Table 1).

Juano as the interpreter does not only translate for Juampi, but also for the spectators who do not understand Kichwa. The literal translation of the utterances of Mamá Rosa reveals that Juano does not translate precisely; he provides rather an informal mediation that makes the scene even more realistic than a scripted exact translation. Compared to the two previous films, the presence of multilingualism is more natural here with the absence of subtitles. The comprehension works because the constellations of communication include one speaker without knowledge of Kichwa who gets help by a mediator.

Qué tan lejos

One of the most famous Ecuadorian films is *Qué tan lejos* ('How much further', 2006), directed by Tania Hermida, a road film about of two women from Spain and Ecuador travelling with many troubles from Quito to Cuenca. It is a film full of elements of modern Ecuadorian culture. Hence, the Kichwa presented in this film can be considered to be a cultural sample. Whereas internal variations of Spanish between the woman from Spain and Ecuadorian people is a present linguistic phenomenon in the whole film, Kichwa is only spoken in one scene (00:49:54–00:51:36). Two indigenous young men talk in Kichwa in presence of Tristeza, the Ecuadorian protagonist, who does not understand the language. Subtitles for the Kichwa dialogue exist neither in the original nor in any foreign subtitled version. Tristeza hitchhikes with a young man on his motorcycle. His appearance in leather clothing is not traditional, but he is *runa* and

not *mishu* ('mestizo'). At the end of the trip, he behaves politely towards Tristeza until she tells him that she is Ecuadorian whereas the man hoped to be with a woman from abroad. In that moment a second young man, also wearing leather clothes, arrives on another motorcycle, they have a conversation in Kichwa, and leave Tristeza alone without explaining to her what is happening. As most spectators do not understand the meaning of the dialogue, the scene became famous and the subject of interviews¹³ with the film's director, Tania Hermida. She answers in an interview to Raquel Ruiz (2008):

Para los mestizos en Ecuador el kichwa no es nuestra lengua materna, sino justamente la "lengua del otro" [...] es una lengua de resistencia a las formas hegemónicas del poder. La hemos tenido muy cerca y, a pesar de ello, nos quedamos siempre fuera de ella. En la película yo quería que el público mestizo se sintiera "expulsado" de la escena, igual que el personaje de Tristeza, que en ese momento se siente "extranjera" a pesar de sí misma.¹⁴

Following the intention of Hermida, we might skip the transcription and translation of the scene. However, a closer look is important to help us understand the real meaning:

(5)

guy 1: ¿Qué más, loco? (--)

subtitle: - *What's up man?*

guy 2: ¿Qué fue, loco, qué tal? (1.0)

subtitle: - *How's it going?*

Imamantatik mana utka shamunki? (.)

translation: *Why haven't you come so far?*

Chay solterakunaka ñukanchikta ña shuyakunkuna. (--)

Those single ladies are already waiting for us.

13 A second interview with Tania Hermida by Jerónimo José Martín: http://www.cinecec.com/EDITOR/noticias/entrevista_taniahermida.htm (Accessed: 03.02.2018).

14 Translation: For the mestizos in Ecuador, Kichwa is not our mother tongue, but just the "language of the other" [...] it is a language of resistance to hegemonic forms of power. We hold it very near and, despite that, we always remain outside of it. In the film, I wanted the mestizo audience to feel "expelled" from the scene, in the same way that the character of Tristeza feels in that moment as a "stranger" despite herself.

guy 1: Paywan kashpami mana utka shamuni. (---)

translation: *As I am with her, I won't come soon.*

guy 2: Paywan, paywan. (-) ((Laughs.)) (-)

translation: *With her, with her.*

Kantaka ñamari riksini. (---)

I already know you.

Ñami nishkani (.) kay mishakunaka (-) inkitanllakunami. (---)

I've already told you that these mestizas only want to flirt.

Chaytaka yuyaypi charina kanki. (---)

Keep that in your head.

guy 1: Allitami ninki. (---) Shuyay, shuyay, ñami rishun (---)

translation: *You're right. Wait, wait, let's go.*

guy 1: Bueno. (---)

subtitle: *Well,*

Cuidárase [sic!] a los cuencanos, me tengo que ir. (1.1)

I've got to go now[,] watch out with the Cuencanos, ok?

Tristeza: Ya, y muchas gracias. (-)

subtitle: *Ok, and thanks for the ride.*

guy 1: Bueno.

translation: *Well. ((not subtitled))*

(00:50:58-00:51:36)

The second guy, apparently having more experience with girls, recognises immediately that Tristeza is a mestiza (*misha*) and recommends to his friend not to be with her, as these girls will hardly go beyond any borders of chaste behaviour. The two young men can talk about this subject in Kichwa because the lexical and grammatical structures are too opaque for someone who has never acquired the language. Therefore, Kichwa fulfils here the function of a secret language, which is actually a function in everyday life; in marketplaces, for instance, sellers use Kichwa in order to make their exchanges behind the counter unintelligible to the customers.

Regarding the communication with the audience, this fragment in *Qué tan lejos* differs from the previous examples as without any subtitle or interpreter the intention is to leave the spectators without an understanding of what is being said.

Conclusion

Whereas the question of functionality of Kichwa fragments – i.e. how Kichwa in communication with a Spanish speaking audience can be possible – is rather easy to reveal, the question of the function of these fragments, i.e. the reasons why the scriptwriters and directors implement Kichwa in their films, is more complex. Within the aspect of *functionality*, three methods can be seen: subtitles, a mediator, and incomprehension as a particular way to show that comprehension is not possible. However, as for *function*, reasons can be given that approach the topic from different levels. A switch to another language may attract attention from the audience and delight the spectators with a well-known and simultaneously unknown language, known in the sense of presence in everyday life, unknown in the sense of opaque language structures. This is indeed a factor which is important for all these films.

Another level of approach concerns the ideological message given by these fragments. They serve as “símbolo emblemático” (Haboud 2005: 16) in order to illustrate that the Ecuadorian society is not monolingual. However, the discussed examples show that Kichwa is exclusively spoken by indigenous people (*runakuna*) and not by the mestizo population (*mishukuna*), or only in the mode of interlinguistic interaction, as in the case of *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda*. Further, the examples of *Ayllu* and *Feriado* illustrate asymmetric forms of bilingualism: in older generations with Kichwa dominant and in younger generations with Spanish dominant.

If the use of Kichwa fragments displays, on one hand, the image of language reality in Ecuadorian highlands, on the other hand, it can create artificial or non-realistic situations.¹⁵ A famous example of artificiality in literature is the long Quechua agony in the French play *Quai ouest* by Bernard-Marie Koltès (1985/2011: 100 f.). We can observe such an

15 In his *opus magnum* on multilingualism in literature, Helmich (2016: 34 ff.) summarizes the stated functions of multilingualism in 22 previous studies that frequently reveal the contradiction between the increase of language reality and the production of artificial situations. Multilingualism becomes clearly artificial when it exceeds social realities in terms of polyglot plays (cf. Koch 2016; 2017).

artificial use of Kichwa in *Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda* where bilingualism is illustrated, but the way of interaction does not reflect a natural way of bilingual interaction as it does in the other films.

Filmography

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