



## Language and Power in a Novel of Education

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**Abstract:** Shunko (1949) written by the Argentine writer Jorge Washington Ábalos is a coming-of-age-novel or Bildungsroman in which the Quechua-Spanish bilingualism of its characters highlights many intra- and extra linguistic factors. These contribute to the sociolinguistic portray of the rural setting of Santiago del Estero in northwestern Argentina. The article analyzes the linguistic and met linguistic elements underlying the Quechua-Spanish contact as illustrated in the text and within the framework of contact linguistics. Furthermore, the work draws from observations and data derived from the author's research on the ethno linguistic vitality of Santiagueño Quichua.

**Keywords:** dialectology, Bildungsroman, contact linguistics, Quechua, Spanish

### Introduction

Published in 1949, Shunko, a novel by the Argentine writer and naturalist Jorge Washington Ábalos (1915-1979), is inspired in part by the author's own experiences as a young teacher in a rural school in Santiago del Estero. Santiago del Estero is a province in northwest Argentina where Quechua (known locally as Quichua) is spoken by approximately one hundred thousand people. Ábalos' direct contact with the socio cultural reality and environment of Santiago thus acquires grandeur in the fictionalization of the cultural shock experienced by the schoolchildren who are the

protagonists of the novel. Thus, the linguistic realism manifest in the Quichua-Spanish bilingualism of the eponymous protagonist, Shunko, and the other schoolchildren, is reflected in family intimacy, games, and the interactions between Shunko and his classmates and their teacher. Hence, the text could be characterized as a coming-of-age novel or Bildungsroman the process by which children between five and twelve years old, many of them monolingual Quichua-speakers until entering school, learn Spanish. Importantly, in this study, the formative aspect of this novel is understood to be its linguistic dimension, which, in conjunction



with several other cultural nuances, undoubtedly contributes to the sociolinguistic richness that forms the background of the novel.

The fundamental aim of this study is to identify and analyze the linguistic and discursive elements that configure linguistic contact in *Shunko*, and to relate them to phenomena associated with language contact, such as displacement, code switching, and hybridization. The analysis is supported by our own investigations and data collected in situ in Santiago del Estero. First, the structure of the novel will be described succinctly, followed by a contextualizing description of the culture of Santiago, highlighting the dimensions of the use of Santiagueño Quichua in the Argentine linguistic panorama. Then, we will enumerate the principal structural and discursive elements of the language, framing them within generalizations about linguistic contact, hybridization, and the conservation and displacement of Quichua. We will especially emphasize the educational environment of the novel, because the extremely rich linguistic material is complemented by many met linguistic references

in which the attitudes and perceptions of the teacher and protagonists demonstrate the complex relationship between language, power, and pedagogy in a country that has not been benevolent toward linguistic minorities.

## 2. Description of the novel *Shunko*

The novel narrates the experiences of a teacher barely eighteen years old who, having recently graduated from a high school in Santiago del Estero is assigned to a rural school. Such schools were, commonly known as "ranch schools" because of their humble construction and their location in the countryside far from departmental capitals.<sup>2</sup> The school is in the Mesopotamia Region of the Santiago del Estero, between the Dulce and Salado rivers. Here, the young Jorge Ábalos spend ten years of his life teaching and living with the local people or *shalakos* – a Quichuaization of Salado. The desolateness of the wild and brutal lands of Santiago, contrasts with the idealized vision the young teacher has of his characters. José Andrés Rivas describes the dichotomous narrative of Ábalos thus: "...ubicó sobre una geografía dura y hostil, y a veces despiadada...[con] esta materia



narrativa de tan escasa seducción...construyó un canto a la esperanza y un retablo sobre los innumerables Caminos de la felicidad" ('...found a harsh and hostile, and at times ruthless, geography, with narrative material so lacking in seduction... he built a song of hope, and a tableau upon the innumerable paths to happiness.')

(Rivas, 1987 & p. 259).

Hence Ábalos, the narrator and protagonist, is in part himself - the teacher and naturalist- and in part the unrealized possibility of the other, as the author expresses in the preface, which is addressed to an imagined young reader: "Quiero honestamente advertirte que no debes suponer que ese maestro que verás andar en las páginas del libro soy yo. Ese es el maestro que yo hubiera querido, o mejor, que yo hubiera debido ser." ('I honestly wish to inform you that you must not assume that I am the teacher you will see walking through the pages of this book. Page: 61

He is the teacher that I would have wanted to, or rather, who I should have been.' (Ábalos 1999/[1949] p.8; emphasis added).

The novella was published in 1949 and had a limited circulation until it was adapted for film in 1960 by director Lautaro Murúa and scriptwriter Augusto Roa Bastos, who the same year, published *Son of Man* (*Hijo de hombre*). In his study of the "different faces of the indigenous Other in Shunko", Eric Courthès writes that in Roa Bastos' reading of *Shunko*, "something of his revolutionary humanism transcended in *Shunko*, in the great humanity of the Teacher for example ..." (Courthès 1999, p. 4).

*Shunko* has surpassed forty editions, has been translated into several languages, and for decades was required reading in Argentine primary schools. Therefore, its classification as a children's novel is noteworthy; nevertheless, in this study we sub-classify it as a coming-of-age novel due to its linguistic dimension (*Bildungsroman*) as it offers a record of the process of learning "Castilian," or Spanish, and describes the budding socialization of rural children in a dominant language and outside of their natural environment.



Ábalos wrote the novel in 1943, approximately six years after he left teaching to begin his entomological research at the Regional Institute of Medicine of the University of Tucumán (Instituto de Medicina Regional de la Universidad de Tucumán; Huerga, 1981, p. 7).<sup>3</sup> His contributions to the development of an anti-arachnid serum and, later, to the eradication of Chagas disease, confined the teacher-naturalist to scientific research and university teaching, forever distancing him from Santiago del Estero. Nevertheless, the writer did not forget his province. His post-Shunko publications continued the central theme of “blissful payment”—nature and the solitude of the countryside—that he recreated from recollections of his time in the mountains of Santiago.<sup>4</sup>

As the writer confesses to Shunko in the letter that introduces the novel, “A veces, Shunko, aquí en mi cuarto de la ciudad, entrecierro las puertas y ventanas y tendido en el sillón, me dejo invadir por la nostalgia. Luego, ustedes mismos me sacan de los recuerdos cuando me parece que golpean mi ventana y creo oír tu voz que me llama: ‘Levantate, señor, te estamos esperando.’” (“Sometimes, Shunko, here in my room in the city, I close

all the doors and windows from within, and laying on the couch, I let nostalgia overtake me. Then, you are the very ones who bring me out of my own memories when I see you banging on my window and I think I hear your voice calling “Wake up sir, we are waiting for you.” (Page: 62) (Ábalos 1999/[1949] p.11). In addition to the note to the reader (Ábalos 1949, pp.7-8)<sup>5</sup> and the letter to Shunko (9-11), the structure of the book consists of fourteen chapters (Ábalos 1949, pp. 12-137), another letter as epilogue (Ábalos, 1949, pp. 138-140), and a Quichua-Spanish dictionary entitled “Brief Glossary of the Quichua language spoken in the central region of the Santiago del Estero Province” (Pequeño vocabulario de la lengua quichua que se habla en la región central de la provincia de Santiago del Estero) (Ábalos, 1949, pp. 141-157).<sup>6</sup> In the second letter to Shunko, the teacher-narrator Ábalos employs syntactic calques that echo Quichua in his farewell to his ex-student:

We agree with Feliciano Huerga’s value judgments of Shunko: “...hay algo que deja y dejará siempre perplejo al crítico [de Shunko] desprevenido: su extrema sencillez lo despista, su transparencia lo desarma y la economía de su composición lo



confunde" ('There is something that has and will always leave the unprepared critic [of Shunko] perplexedPage: 62 : its extreme simplicity will throw him or her off, its transparency is disarming, and the economy of its composition is confounding.')(Huerga,1981, p. 94). Later, the critic comments that "las preocupaciones de Ábalos no fueron estéticas, fueron vitales...sintió primero y comprendió después, que su forma expresiva debía ser necesariamente poética, recogida, elegíaca, de recatado énfasis dada la humildad de la materia y el género que trataba" ('Ábalos' concerns were not esthetic, but vital... he first felt and later understood that his expressive form must necessarily be poetic, collected, elegiac, of cautious emphasis given the humility of the material and the genre used." Page: 62 (Huerga, 1981). We believe thatShunko'shumanity makes it deserving of a place among the other universal works of literature thatportray child characters, including Oliver Twist, Tom Sawyer, andHuckleberry Finn (Huerga, 1981, p. 97).

### **3. The Quichua of Santiago in the Argentine linguistic panorama:**

Santiago del Estero, with the provinces of Jujuy, Salta, Tucumán, Catamarca, and La Rioja, is part of

a region called the Argentine Northwest (ANW). The region is characterized by linguistic features rooted in a history that clearly differentiates it from the rest of the Republic of Argentina.<sup>8</sup> The province of Santiago del Estero is divided into twenty-seven departments, of which eight are fully in the Quichua-speaking zone, six are partially in the zone, and another six are on the periphery of the zone and have few Quichua-speakers. Notably, the Quichua spoken in Santiago is one of two dialect variants spoken in Argentina, with a territorial distribution that essentially covers the central zone of the province.

The other Quichua variant, known colloquially ascolla, originates from the Quichua spoken in Bolivia. According to Alfredo Torero's classification (1964), these two variants of Quichua belong to the QII-C type (op. cit. in Alderetes and Albarracín, 2004, p. 83); the Santiagueño variant is the only variant spoken in a non-Andean zone.<sup>9</sup> To appreciate the linguistic reality of the Santiagueño community depicted in Shunko, it is useful to analytically differentiate three communication registers that are subject to contextual and socio cultural



variations, and other extra-linguistic restrictions:

- Official or national language, formal level: the language that requires a level of instruction and participation in the dominant culture to be understood and used. It is fundamentally written, and its oral repertoire is limited to academic, literary, etc. circles. It is learned through the transmission of rules and norms.

- Official or national language, informal level: the language that requires a lower level of instruction; it is spoken and written. It is learned in the nuclear family and from friends and not through the transmission of rules and norms.

- Regional dialects and their variants: these are specific to rural areas that have little contact with urban centers. They are primarily spoken rather than written.

This tripartite structuring of language assumes that language is a cultural phenomenon that, like other such phenomena, is learned in society as a part of the socialization process. Society and language are correlated inasmuch as social segregation manifests itself in the linguistic context and language use reflects social structures. According to Fishman (1972, p. 76), language conservation and displacement reflect the relationship between change or

stability in the patterns of language use and the psychological or cultural processes that exist in language communities in which more than one linguistic variant is spoken to communicate with people within and outside of the community. Fishman suggests three major criteria:

- Habitual use of the language over time or in space

- Psychosocial and cultural factors and their relation to stability or change in habitual language use

- Behavior towards the language

For the purposes of this study, we adopt the perspective of Ricardo Nardi, a student of the country's indigenous languages, toward rural Argentine cultures and their languages as "una compleja hibridación de las culturas españolas de los siglos XVI y XVII con rasgos de las lenguas indígenas, a las que se les fueron agregando el aporte de otros inmigrantes europeos, en grado variado según las diversas áreas geográficas" ('A complex hybridization of the Spanish cultures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with traits from indigenous languages, to which contributions from other European immigrants were added





to various degrees depending on the range of geographic areas') ( Page: 63 Nardi, 1962). We should also consider the influences of the Rio de la Plata region and of the metropolis on rural languages. These influences have been intensifying as access to media has spread to the farthest points of the territory and through the internal migration of Santiagueños to the city.

Therefore, based on the linguistic features identified in Shunko, it is important to differentiate between the rural Quichua variant of Santiago del Estero, which is more conservative, and the variant used by the Santiagueño migrants, which shares more or less of its features with the urban language register, depending on the particular circumstances of each speaker (Lorenzino, 2001, 2003). From the data collected during fieldwork both in Buenos Aires and in Santiago del Estero, we have been able to confirm the processes by which structure shifts occur when dialects and languages come into contact. It is precisely those shifts that lead to the disappearance or replacement of certain marked features of the rural linguistic modality with others that are frequently, though not exclusively,

from a more urbanized variant, used by Santiagueños in Buenos Aires. The criteria of Nardi and Fishman provide a useful framework for performing a linguistic analysis of Shunko, which involves situating the language of the novel within

the emerging diglossic relationships between Spanish and Quichua in the school environment and the assessment of these relationships as possible factors in linguistic conservation, change, or displacement.

In this linguistic context, Spanish, the dominant language, modifies the linguistic repertoire of the students who speak Quichua, the dominated language. Ultimately, this process may result in the displacement of Santiagueño Quichua. In fact, we observed this linguistic displacement in our field studies of Santiagueño migrants who left the province for employment, healthcare, and education in large cities such as Buenos Aires and Rosario. The discrimination against their language and culture that Quichua-speaking Santiagueños experience in urban contexts accelerates younger generations' desertion of their mother tongue (Lorenzino, 2004).<sup>10</sup>



#### 4. Language and meta-language in Shunko

Our analysis of *Shunko* is based on linguistic studies of literary dialect by Ives (1950), Pederson (1985), and Minnick (2004), who studied variants of English used in the Southern United States and African-American English found in literary texts such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Sound and the Fury* by William Faulkner, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Hurston.<sup>11</sup>

We hasten to acknowledge that the literary representation of speech does not always reflect the linguistic reality, especially in the representation of dialect variations in all their formal and semantic dimensions. Similarly, the writer chooses, intentionally or not, whether to express the idiosyncratic modalities of the characters' speech in the standard or dialect variant. We are not concerned with analyzing the stylistic intention of Jorge Ábalos in *Shunko*. Fiction's varying degree of correspondence to linguistic reality requires methodological and theoretical adjustment that the linguist safely employs in field work. Therefore, the application of adaptive patterns to description

and observation external to the literary text can be helpful. The novel *Shunko* allows us to explore more thoroughly the theoretical questions about the relationship between the textual dialect and the real dialect of the Santiagueño environment. The novel also offers a means for analyzing the themes of language and power manifested in the literary representation of the teacher's and his students' Spanish and Quichua. The ideological dimension is particularly relevant because we approach the novel as a formative linguistic record in which the learning of Spanish by monolingual Quichua-speaking children, who are geographically and socially marginalized occurs in the context of a school in which Spanish is imposed as the official language of the State. To synthesize, the methodological approach applied in this study does not replace literary interpretation nor displace other studies of linguistic methodology. As Lisa Minnick states in her linguistic studies of literary texts,

"Literary researchers wary of linguistic methods as appropriate means for approaching literature may eventually come to appreciate the linguistic methods upon realizing that there need not be (and should not be) a one-size-fits-





all approach and that the approach need not (and, again, should not) reduce a work of art merely to a list of numbers and percentages, even though these numbers can provide a useful new approach to considering a literary text." (Minnick, 2004, p.46). In this study, the rich linguistic material relevant to the formative dimension of the novel was grouped into two broad categories: language use (§4.1) and met linguistic evaluations (§4.2). This division reflects the importance of including both direct discourse about the novel's characters in the bilingual context and the evaluations of the teacher-narrator in his ethnographic role as observer-participant in the linguistic education of the students. We first discuss this second category because it provides, quantitatively and qualitatively, the most representative examples of the Spanish/Quichua diglossia. Moreover, it offers insight into the role of schooling as an initiating agent of the childhood acquisition of Spanish.

The following examples offer neither a complete nor a comprehensive representation of all of the linguistic aspects of the novel. The Quichuaisms and regionalisms found in the numerous descriptions of the

customs and habits of the Santiagueño countryside have not been included.

### 1. Language in Shunko

In this section, we discuss the linguistic data and met linguistic evaluations of the narrator, whose roles in the novel transcend that of a simple narrator. Our discussion reveals that the teacher shows the ethnographic acuity of an observer who, in addition to analyzing the communicative situation of the classroom, notes what he sees and hears outside of the classroom when he interacts with students, their family members, and the people who make up the "small territory" ("pago chico") in which his teaching activities are incorporated.

The author uses the typographic resources of quotation marks and italics to objectively present his linguistic observations, highlighting the phonological, morph syntactic, and lexico semantic data analyzed in §4.1.1. In §4.2, we contextualize the author's met linguistic observations within the general framework of this study of Shunko.



#### 4.1.1 Linguistic observations of the

**teacher-narrator in Shank:** The phonological data yield the smallest corpus. The reduction of the consonant groups, e.g., "alcazar" for "alcazar" in (1), could characterize childlike language because, although the combination /-lk-/ does exist in Hispanic phonology, e.g., alkyl < alcohol (Alerts, 2001, p. 273), the syllabic structure (C)VC + CV(C) in Quichua (QS), in which two consecutive consonants appear in the intervocalic position, supports other consonants, including the liquid /r/, e.g., warmi 'mujer' "woman" (Alderetes, 2001, p. 124).

(1) "Shunko aspira suavemente el aire y estira la nariz procurando "acanzar" el aroma del asado a punto..." ('Shunko breathes the air in softly and extends his nose attempting to "acanzar" (reach) the aroma of the roast nearly ready...' Page: 65

(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 19)

The relative prestige of two or more languages in contact is an important factor in the level of transference. However, even in stable and lasting bilingualisms and between languages that share equal social status, borrowings occur on the morphological and syntactic

level (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988). It is expected, then, that Spanish-Quichua contact would manifest a greater intensity of borrowing, considering the legacy of social inequality between the two languages. We will discuss two phenomena in the morph syntactic category: morphological adaptation and word order inversion. For example, the verbs tikiyay 'cascotear, terronear, apedrear' "to stone, throw clods, throw stones at" (Bravo 1991/1956, p.329) and tinkay 'acción y efecto de dar capirotazos' "action and effect of flicking" (Bravo 1991/1956, p. 328) can be used to demonstrate the morphemic and functional adaptability of Quichua loanwords in Spanish:

- tikiarla, [tiki-A-R-LA]: QSroot + STEM + INF. + dir.obj.PRON.

[1]. "Una urpila (palomita) caminaba ligerito por la huella, delante de él, pero ni ánimo para tikiarla con un terrón tuvo." ('An urpila [bird] walked lightly on the trail ahead of him, but he had no desire at all to tikiarla [italics in original] with a clod.' (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 62) tikiadores, [tiki-A-DOR-ES]: QSroot + STEM + AGENT + PLURAL



[2]. "...el magnífico blanco móvil atrae a los tikiadores que descargan sobre él una lluvia de piedras." ('...the magnificent moving target draws the tikiadores who unleash a hail of stones upon it.')

Page: 65  
(p. 121-tinkiar, [tinki-A-R]: QSroot + STEM + INF

[3]. "¡Lindo frío para tinkiar la oreja!" ('Lovely chill to tinkiarone's ear!') (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 107)

The text also contains numerous examples of morphological incorporation with a nominal root. These examples show that hybridization is not just morphological but extends to ('[Pedro's sister and María's brother] have just arrived home')

Page: 66 chayaranku justo wasiyp' [...] (chayay 'llegar' "to arrive" Page: 66

The subject-object-verb (SOV) word order of QS is reflected in the novel's dialogue: 12

(9) "Jinete es, pero el otro día el "Doradillo" lo tumbó muy lindo."  
(27)

('A [good] rider he is, but the other day the 'Doradillo' threw him down pretty good.')

the levels of phrase, sentence, and discourse:

qarachiento, [qarach-ient-o] 'que pica, lleno de costras' "itches, full of scabs" Page: 65

[13]. QS root + QUALITY + MASC. (Q qarachaidem)  
(6)challuero, [challu-er-o] 'pescador' "fisherman": QS root + AGENT + MASC. (Q challua:j 'que pesca' "that fishes", challua 'fish')

(7) mishi china 'gata' "cat" [fem]  
(Q mishi 'gato' "cat [masc]")

(8) [la hermana de Pedro y el hermano de María]justo han llegado a casa'

; cf. Q chayraq 'recientemente, justo' "recently, just" Page: 66

, Q pana 'la hermana del hermano' "the sister of the brother" Page: 66 and Q tura 'el hermano de la hermana' "the brother of the sister" Page: 66 ).

[4]. "Gordo su potro, ¿no?" (Idem.) ('Pretty fat his colt, right?')

[5]. "Uno a la mañana y otro a la tarde van a ir." (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 61) ('One in the morning and another in the afternoon will go.')

More numerous, however, are the lexical Quichuaisms in the descriptive language, which appear most frequently in the semantic



fields of nature, beliefs, customs, and traditions:

[5]. "Un ututo cruza disparando con su colita en alto." ('An ututo crosses, shooting its little tail into the air.')(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 23) (ututo: "field lizard" Page: 66

[6]. "En un wahchintakho tísico el boyero ensaya su canto. ('In a consumptive wahchintakho, the boyero practices his song.')(Page: 66 (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 25)[wahchintakho: "bush"; boyero: "person who looks after or drives oxen" Page: 66 ,from rural Spanish]

[7]. "Ahora tomaría mate hasta quedar populo" ('And now he would drink mate until he's populo')Page: 66 [populo: "has a large navel"] (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 66)

[8]. "Solía barrerlo con pichana" ('He tended to sweep it with a pichana')(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 78) [pichana: "broom"kl]13

The novel also contains examples of additional features that Santiagueño monolingual and bilingual speech share with other Hispanic subdialects from northwestern Argentina:

[16]. "Cuando alguna vez, por la mañana lo "pilla" la bandera en su casa. Shunko no puede andar tranquilo y se apura para no llegar

tarde." ('When sometimes the flag "surprises" him at home. Shunko Page: 66

can't relax and hurries along to keep from arriving late.')(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 78)14

[17]. "Llegó corriendo Elbia, que se plegó al montón inquiriendo: -¿Qué pasa? ¿Qué pasa, che?"

('Elbia came running, and joined the crowd asking: "What happened? What happened, che?')(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 98)Page: 66

(18) "La Tanshu se acercó toda avergonzada, mordiendo la punta del cuello del vestido y estirando la mano izquierda." ('The Tanshu approached filled with shame, chewing the edge of the collar of her dress and reaching out with her left hand.')(Page: 66 (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 101)15

#### 4.2. Met linguistic evaluations of the teacher-narrator in Shunko

##### 4.2.1 School: learning and ideology:

Because Shunko is a novel aimed at young people and has clear didactic touches,<sup>16</sup> it is expected that most of the narrative space will be dedicated to Shunko's ranch-school and the Quichua-speaking students' education in the Spanish language.

Indeed, twenty-four passages alluding to the teacher's direct or indirect intervention in the



linguistic education of the students were identified. These moments are part of two processes that intertwine over the course of Shunko: the first is associated with the students' "progress" in learning Spanish, the school being a supporting agent for this education, and the other with the process of accepting the political-linguistic ideology, that acts as a backdrop to the education that takes place in the school.

The excerpts in examples (19) and (20) are two of many that allude to learning, both in general and linguistically. The teacher-ethnographer, observing Shunko and his sister playing on the banks of the river, describes the scene:

(19) "A veces Shunko habla en "castilla" frases íntegras. Es evidente su progreso en este idioma, pero no hace abuso de él, pues Tanshu suele quedar mirándolo sin comprender." ('Sometimes Shunko speaks full sentences in "Castilla." His progress in this language is evident, but he does not abuse it, as Tanshu tends to stare at him, uncomprehending') Page: 67

(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 21)

Tanshu, who is several years younger than her ten-year-old

brother, is not yet old enough to attend school. This is apparent in the differential acquisition of Spanish between the two siblings: Shunko's nascent bilingualism is evident in his idiomatic progress, which surpasses vocabulary learning to include "whole phrases" (frases íntegras). Nevertheless, Shunko speaks Quichua with his sister, a linguistic behavior universal in diglossia and which establishes as polar opposites the realms of field and family and school and not-family.

(20) "Poco a poco empezó a leer, a sumar, a restar, aprendió los nombres de muchas cosas; ya era capaz de hablar largo rato en castellano." ('He slowly began to read, to add, to subtract. He learned the names of many things. By then, he was able to speak at great length in Castilian.') Page: 67

(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 71)

The functional separation of Spanish and Quichua relegates the latter to the more informal domains of the Santiagueño diglossia. The use of Quichua in the capital city is rare, especially in formal situations that are exclusively Spanish domains, e.g., school, public offices, banks, etc. In the school



environment, the rural teacher is the enforcer of a homogenizing linguistic policy that imposes Spanish as the only language of Argentines.

It is clear that there are exceptions to the prohibition on speaking Quichua in School because only the students who are the most competent in Spanish are expected to obey it. Through such policies, Spanish learning begins to displace Quichua in the school environment, despite the resistance, even among older students, to using Spanish among themselves: the flag. Shunko already knows that." ("De mañanita, para avisar a los chicos que es hora de venir a la escuela, el maestro iza la bandera, *izar* quiere decir subir la bandera, *arriar* quiere decir bajar la bandera. Shunko ya sabe eso.") (p. 78)

(21) "Cuando ya los alumnos mayores habían aprendido el castellano el señor no quería que hablaran quichua en la escuela, para que se ejercitaran en "la castilla". Como ellos seguían hablando en quichua impuso la pena de escribir en el pizarrón: "No debo hablar quichua en la escuela", al que sorprendiera en falta."

('Once the older students had already learned Castilian, the

master no longer wanted them to speak Quichua in school, so they could practice in "Castilla." Because they continued to speak in Quichua, he imposed the punishment of writing on the blackboard 'I should not speak Quichua in school,' upon anyone he found at fault. Page: 67 ') (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 97)

The teacher, with authority vested in him by the State, instills in the bilingual student respect and fear simultaneously. Thus, one of the mothers who is opposed to her son's abandonment of his sheep-tending duties to attend school, warns him,

(22) "Dicen que [el maestro] los hacía estar sentados toda la mañana en un banco y ¡guay! del que se mueva. ¡Y cuando él [el alumno] no entendiera la castilla!"

('They say [the teacher] made them sit on a stool the entire morning and, Wham! If anybody moved. Even though [the student] doesn't understand Castilla! Page: 68 (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 62)

Indeed, Shunko's linguistic experience does not prepare him for his first day of classes, when he discovers that in the classroom, "el maestro hablaba en quichua y que sólo de vez en cuando decía alguna palabra en castellano" ('the teacher spoke in Quichua and only occasionally said a word or two in





Castilian.')(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 65):

(23)-¿Imatah sutiiki?17 -Benicio Palavecino. -¿Cómo te llaman en tu casa? -Shunko.

-Bueno, Shunko -dijo, siempre en quichua-, aquí tienes cuaderno, lápiz y borrador; andá, sentate y escribí lo que quieras, andá.

- Mana iachani18...-llenándosele los ojos de lágrimas (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 64) ('What do they call you at home?')

"Well, Shunko—he said, still speaking in Quichua—here is your notebook, pencil and eraser; come along, sit here and write whatever you feel like, come along.

- Mana iachani... his eyes filled with tears.')

(24) "El maestro se sentó en un banco y sacando un cuaderno y un lápiz, le dijo -para gran sorpresa de Shunko- en quichua: - Tienes dos chicos para la escuela. ¿Cómo se llaman?" ('The teacher sat on a stool, and taking out a notebook and pencil, said to him—to Shunko's great surprise—in Quichua: -You have two boys for school. What are their names?')Page: 68

(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 59).

In Quichua-speaking zones, a child usually arrives at school with greater fluency in his mother tongue. For this reason,

communication among students in Quichua by necessity transcends the space of family and play. Those who have been in school for longer, and are therefore better acquainted with Spanish act as interpreters ("lenguaraz") for the recent arrivals:

(25)¿Por qué no quieres pasar? No respondió.

-Elías, preguntale vos.

Elías, satisfecho de su rol de lenguaraz, se apresuró, pegó su cabeza a la de Pablito y hubo un cuchilleo en quichua. Se incorporó luego el intérprete:

Dice que no sabe leer. (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 86) ('Why don't you want to go?Page: 68

He didn't respond -Elias, you ask him.

Elias, satisfied with his role as interpreter, hurried over, put his head up to Pablito's, and there was a whispering in Quichua. The interpreter then sat up:

-He says he doesn't know how to read.')

Nevertheless, it is the teacher who most often violates the prohibition against speaking Quichua in class, demonstrating a sarcastic complicity that the students quickly catch in a wink or a gesture from the teacher.

(26)El maestro se lo [el libro] recibió, pero casi inmediatamente



se prendió de él la Pipila: -Dámelo, yo no tengo -dijo en quichua.

El maestro no soltó:

-Te lo doy si pides en castellano.

Pipila miraba a los chicos buscando auxilio. El maestro le guiñó un ojo a Elbia y se hizo el distraído mirando a otro lado. Elbia le sopló varias veces al oído a la Pipila y cuando Elbia la hubo aprobado, le dijo al maestro la chinitilla:

-Da a mí.

-Dame a mí, ¿qué? -Libro.

-¿Para qué?

-Para que leo. (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 88)

('The teacher received it [the book], but almost immediately, Pipila tried to take it from him: Give it to me, I don't have -he said in Quichua

The teacher did not let it go:

-I'll give it to you if you ask for it in Castilian.

Pipila looked at the children in search for help. The teacher winked at Elbia and pretended to look off in distraction. Elbia whispered several times in Pipila's ear and when Elbia had approved, the little chinitilla told the teacher:

-Give to me -Give me what? -Book

-What for?

-For me to read.'

The teacher's linguistic behavior demonstrates the duality of the bilingual educator, who must at times suspend adherence to linguistic ideology to address the most pressing pedagogical needs that exist in those localized corners far from the dominant centers.

(27)-Ausha -llamó-, traeme un vaso de agua.

Cuando Absalón salía corriendo a cumplir su encargo el maestro agregó: -¡La de la tinaja está más fresca!

Absalón se detuvo en su carrera; se volvió lentamente y señaló al maestro con el dedo: -¡Has dicho en quichua!

El señor puso cara compungida, se levantó lentamente y fue hacia el pizarrón; tomó la tiza y esperó la sentencia... El señor nunca más prohibió quichua en la escuela (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 98).

('Ausha -he called-, bring me a glass of water.

When Absalon ran out to fulfill the task, the teacher added: -From the coolest basin!

Absalon paused in his run; he turned slowly and pointed at the teacher with his finger:

-You just spoke in Quichua!

The master made a remorseful face, stood up slowly and walked to the



chalkboard; he took up a piece of chalk and awaited his sentence... the master never again prohibited Quichua in the schoolPage: 69 .')

Although the Argentine census data do not provide even an approximate idea of the level of bilingualism in Santiago del Estero, our contact with modern Santiagueños indicates that the social differences between the departmental capitals and the rural zones, exacerbated by the Santiagueño exodus to big cities, have not lessened since the publication of Shunkoin 1949. On the contrary, there are still a significant number of children for whom Quichua remains the dominant code.

Naturally, Shunko learns numbers in his second language when he arrives at school, with the occasional predictable transpositions from his native language (p. 25):

(28)-¿Sabes contar, Shunko? -No sé

-¡Qué no vas a saber!...Contá un poquito. -Suh, ish kai, kinsa...taa...no sé más.

-¡Ah! ¿Has visto que sabías un poco? Bueno ahora te enseñaré a contar en castilla,¿quieres? - Uno...dos...tres...cuatro...cinco...; tienes que repetir ahora conmigo.

Y así Shunko aprendió los números hasta cinco.(Ábalos 1999/1949, pp. 66-67) ('-Do you know how to count, Shunko?

-I don't know.

-How is it you don't know!... Count a little. -Page: 70  
Suh, ish kai, kinsa...taa...I don't know any more.

-Ah! But you see you do know a little? Well ok, I will now teach you to count in Castilla. Would you like that?

-One...two...three...four...five...  
You have to repeat after me now. "And that is how Shunko learned the numbers up to five.')

(29) -Ahora te preguntaré una cosa. Shunko se acercó nuevamente.

-Si tienes dos caramelos y te doy uno más, ¿cuántos tienes? -Kimsa.

-Bien, tres; no olvides que en castilla, kimsa es tres. Bueno, si de esos tres te comen dos, ¿cuántos te quedan? -Uno.

-Muy bien. Ahora tienes dos bolitas y te doy dos más ¿cuántas tienes? - Taa...cuatro -se corrigió rápidamente. (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 67) ('-Now I will ask you something. Shunko came over once more.

-If you have two candies and I give you one more, how many do you have? -Kimsa



-Good, three; don't forget that in Castilla, kimsa is tres. Ok, if you eat two of those three, how many are left? -One

-Very good. Now you have two beads and I give you two more. How many do you have? - Taa...cuatro- he rapidly corrected himself.'

In the final line of (28), a change in the teacher's protagonism occurs as he passes from an active participant in the students' education to an ethnographer who records in his journal the observations and reflections of a day of fieldwork.

The teacher explains "the success" (el éxito) of Shunko's learning in terms of a natural and participatory pedagogy diametrically opposed to the orthodoxy of the conventional teaching practices of the era. Indeed, Shunko's school experience resembles the currently prevailing models of intercultural bilingual education in Argentina, in which teachers rely on the students' native language to facilitate new-language learning.

(30) No se sorprendió el maestro por el éxito de Shunko. Ya había comprobado que los chicos lograban enseñarse entre sí cosas que él no pudo meter en la cabeza a algún "duro". ¿Cómo lo conseguían?

Vaya uno a saber; los chicos se comprenden entre sí mejor que con los adultos. ¿Lo dice Pestalozzi o los otros grandes de la enseñanza?

No lo sabemos, pero el sistema a veces tenía éxito allí donde se estrellaba la poca pedagogía de que el maestro era capaz. Quizá influyera también el dominio fluido del quichua que tenía el alumno y su pequeño maestro y que facilitaba las explicaciones. (Ábalos 1999/1949, pp. 90-91)19

('The teacher was not surprised by Shunko's success. He had already confirmed that the students learned to teach each other things that he was unable to get into some of the "hardheads." How did they manage it? One realizes that the children understand each other better than they do the adults. Do Pestalozzi or other teaching greats speak of that? We do not know, but the system sometimes succeeds where the teacher's limited pedagogy failed. May be the total fluency in Quichua that the student and his little teacher had also helped with explaining things.')

Page: 31)  
-¿Quién sabe un cuento, chicos? - preguntó el maestro, mientras bebían el mate.



-Yo sé uno de Juan el zorro, señor – dijo Elbia-. Anoche me lo contó mi papá.

-Bueno, pero...yo te lo voy a contar en quichua, señor, no voy a poder en castilla

-Puedes decirlo en quichua, así entenderán mejor los más chicos. (Ábalos1999/1949, pp. 111-112)

(-Which of you knows a story, children? -Asked the teacher, while they drank the mate.

-I know one about Juan the Fox, sir -Elbia said-. Last night my father told it to me. Page:

-Let's hear it...

-Ok, but... I'm going to tell it to you in Quichua, sir; I won't be able to in Castilla.

-You can tell it in Quichua, since the other children will understand it better.')

-Let's hear it...

-Ok, but... I'm going to tell it to you in Quichua, sir; I won't be able to in Castilla. -You can tell it in Quichua, since the other children will understand it better.')

The role of language as a formative element and unifying force in the identity of a language community is unquestionable. Shunko presents numerous situations that are emblematic of the relationship between language and identity. These events reveal the diglossic

dimensions through which childhood bilingualism begins to pass as formal schooling begins. In the novel, the young urban reader and, perhaps, the teacher himself, are surprised that the children's ethno linguistic space includes neither the province nor the immensity of a country, environments recognized by any "Argentine" reader:

(32)Un día el maestro les dijo que eran argentinos, otro día les explicó que eran santiagueños. ¡Cómo! ¿Eran argentinos o eran santiagueños? Pero después comprendió que era argentino, que era santiagueño y que era costero también.(Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 72)

('One day the teacher told them they were Argentinian, and another day he explained they were from Santiago. How?! Were they Argentinians or Santiagueños? But later he understood that he was Argentinian, that he was Santiagueño, and that he was from the coast, too.')

The students are coastal people, Quichua speakers from the zone between the Dulce and Salado rivers. Their identity consciousness associates Argentineness not with a socio cultural value, but with the



object that represents its boundaries:

(33) El maestro les mostró un rol grande que colgó en el pizarrón, tenía una tablita larga arriba y una tablita larga abajo; les dijo que eso era la República Argentina... Eso era un mapa. Shunko creyó que la República Argentina era un mapa. Cuando un día el maestro les hizo dibujar un plano de la escuela y del lugar en un rol, Shunko comprendió qué era un mapa. (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 72).

('The teacher showed them a large roll that he hung on the chalkboard, with a long tab at the top and a long one at the bottom; he told them this was the Republic of Argentina... This was a map. Shunko thought that the Republic of Argentina was a map. When the teacher asked him one day to draw a floor plan of the school and grounds on a roll of paper, Shunko finally understood what a map was.')

#### 4.2.2 Home and nature: the vitality of Quichua

The school in Shunko is a discontinuous space interposed between the center—home—and nature, which form a space where Quichua flourishes. The family, the countryside, games, and childhood stories are the social contexts in which the language is found in all its ethno linguistic dynamics. Several examples appear below:

(34) "Están sentados uno al lado del otro y conversan de lo que pueden conversar nuestros chicos pastores en ese dulce idioma que es el quichua." (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 21)

('They are seated side by side and speak about what they may, our shepherd boys, in that sweet language that is Quichua.')

(35) "Tanshu no conoce el caso y mientras caminan tras la majada, el muchachito le relata en quichua la leyenda del boyero." (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 25)

('Tanshu does not know about it, and as they walk behind the herd, the little boy tells her in Quichua the legend of the boyero.')

(36) "Doña Jashi... [h]ablaba por lo que no veía ni oía. Su voz, un poco gastada, no era desagradable y le daba al quichua un sabor especial, pues su pronunciación no se había deformado por el castellano, idioma que desconocía." (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 95)

('Miss Jashi... [s]poke about what was not seen or heard. Her voice, a little worn out, was not disagreeable and it gave her Quichua a special flavor, given that her pronunciation had never been misshapen by Castilian, which was a language she did not know.')

However, the inhabitants of these zones use Spanish to accommodate those who do not know Quichua, as





the teacher observes during his travels through the province. In the novel, this accommodation is rarely necessary because the teacher, from the time of his arrival, demonstrates a positive attitude towards Quichua. It is also possible that in the 1930s, there were monolingual speakers who did not know Spanish and for whom accommodation was impossible. Today, Spanish-Quichua bilingualism is generalized throughout the region.

(37) Vivía Ana renga en un ranchito miserable no lejos de la escuela. Dio la mano al maestro estirando los dedos por debajo de las piernas sucias del chico que tenía en brazos

(‘-Quiero pintar mi casa- dijo [el maestro] en quichua. (Ábalos 1999/1949, p.77

“Ana lived lamely in a miserable ranch not far from the school. She offered her hand to the teacher, reaching out her fingers from beneath the dirty legs of the boy she held in her arms.

However, though he accommodates himself in general to the regional language, the teacher resorts to Spanish to invest himself with authority when he seeks to convince the parents of the importance of sending their children to school:

(38) El maestro se aproximó y comenzó a hablarle mientras ella lavaba dándole la espalda. Estuvo hablando largo rato. Shunko no entendía porque lo hacía en castellano. Seguramente que su madre le entendía poco y nada; oyó que le contestó en quichua de mala manera:

- No tengo chicos para echar a la escuela. (Ábalos 1999/1949, p. 58) 20 Page: 72

(‘The teacher came over and began to speak to her as she washed with her back to him. They spoke a long while. Shunko did not understand because they spoke in Castilian. Surely his mother understood little to nothing; he heard her answer him in rude Quichua:

-I don’t have enough children to waste on school.’)

Nevertheless, in these communicative situations, the teacher’s Spanish is marked by features of the bilingual Santiagueño variant, e.g., the inversion of the subject-object-verb order:

(39) El lunes me los mandas. Uno a la mañana y otro a la tarde van a ir, así uno te queda para las ovejas... Cuando el gobierno mande ropa te daré. Avisale al hombre que anduve yo. (Ábalos, 1999/1949, p. 61)



(‘On Monday send them to me. One in the morning and another in the afternoon will go, and so one will be with you to care for the sheep...When the government sends clothes I will give them to you. Tell the man I was here.’)

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One of the final scenes of the novel shows the children becoming conscious of their dual marginalization, both for speaking a language that no one values outside the community and for the social condition of the ranch-school. This consciousness begins to dawn when the teacher is obligated by the ministry authorities to take his students to the city to participate in the independence commemoration.

The Quichua-speaking children are not able to understand this other society of children who dress in white clothes, the same color as their skin, and who communicate with each other in a language that is sometimes difficult for them to understand. It is this part of the novel in which Shunko’s personal growth is most starkly perceived; although he is still a child, he begins to become aware of his condition as a segregated child:

(40)“Estaban en recreo cuando llegó el automóvil con las

“Señoritas” del pueblo...Las maestras descendieron del auto, protestando contra el calor y la tierra del camino...” (Ábalos, 1999/1949, p. 127)

(‘They were at recess when the “Young Ladies” from town arrived in their car... The teachers got out of the car, protesting against the heat and the dust from the road...’)

(41)“Subió al escenario la directora de la escuela del pueblo; era una “señorita” muy gorda, con un guardapolvo muy blanco, que dijo cosas muy difíciles de entender.” (Ábalos, 1999/1949, p. 134)

(‘The principal of the local school stepped up to the stage; she was a very fat “Young Lady,” with a very white smock, and who said things that were very hard to understand.’)Page: 73

(42) “...los puebleros son muy atrevidos...Un rubito lo hizo llorar a Wilfredo haciéndole burla por el pantalón.” (Ábalos, 1999/1949, p. 135)

(‘... the townsfolk are very forward... One little blond boy made Wilfredo cry when he made fun of his pants.’)



(43) "Vino una señorita del pueblo, le dijo bagual<sup>21</sup> al Wilfredo y le tironeó muy fuerte de la oreja." (Ábalos, 1999/1949, p. 136) ('A young lady from the town came, the bagual told Wilfredo, and he tugged his ear really hard.')

## 5. Conclusions

This paper examined the linguistic and meta-linguistic elements that result from Quichua-Spanish contact in the literary discourse of the novel *Shunko* by Jorge W. Ábalos. The aim of this analysis

## References

<sup>2</sup>Before the boy decides to enter the teaching profession, his older brother advises him: "Debes buscar la felicidad en ese grupo de changos rotosos que hablan un idioma que no es el tuyo y que te esperan en la escuela de barro." ("You should seek happiness among this group of ragged monkeys who speak a language that is not your own, and who await you in the schoolhouse made of mud.") (Ábalos 1999/1949], p. 56).

<sup>3</sup> Ábalos frequently imagines the students as insects, as evidenced in the following passage from *Shunko*: "Esos chicos eran "las hormigas". Algunos se tomaron en serio el nombre y cuando se cruzaban con

was to identify aspects of power, linguistic learning, and socialization in the diglossic context of the bilingual zones in Santiago del Estero. The methodology does not replace literary interpretation nor displace linguistic research. Rather, both approaches mutually enrich each other, especially when applied to a novel like *Shunko* in which the relationship between form and meaning is varied and complex due to the interaction between bilingualism, socialization, and identity in the Quichua-speaking community.

otro que volvía, juntaban las cabezas y las movían como las hormigas" ('those boys were "the ants." Some took the name seriously, and when they passed one another, they touched their heads and moved about like ants.')

(Ábalos, 1999, p. 80).

<sup>4</sup>*Animals, Legends, and Folk Songs [Animales, leyendas y coplas]* (1953); *Velvet, the Black Huntress [Terciopelo, la cazadora negra]*

(1971); *Popular Folk Singer [Coplero popular]* (1973); *Shalacos [Shalacos]* (1975). He published dozens of scientific studies in addition to engaging in scientific outreach: *What Do You Know About Vipers? [¿Qué sabe usted de víboras?]* (1964).



5. The first edition, printed in Tucumán in 1949, includes introductory notes about the vocabulary that were omitted from later editions (Ábalos, 1949, pp.153-154). Another difference between this edition and the definitive edition of the text is its inclusion of a prologue written by historian and nationalist leader, Ernesto Palacio (1900-1979).

6. The “brief glossary” contains a total of 835 words and represents the first lexicographic record of Santiagueño Quichua. Domingo Bravo’s *Santiagueño Quichua-Spanish Dictionary (Diccionario Quichua Santiagueño-Castellano)* would not be published until 1956, and it remains the most complete lexical compilation of the language (Bravo 1991 [1956], 1987 [1977]).

7 . The quoted phrase in the original is notable: “...who once was” (“...que antes era”). It mimics the inverted sentence order that the teacher was used to hearing after years of living with his “savages,” “little sprites,” or simply “friends” (“salvajes”, “pequeños duendecitos”, “amigos”—nicknames he uses to refer lovingly to his students). This phrasing constitutes a conspiratorial wink to Shunko, who is grateful to the teacher from

whom he learned “to be someone, knowing how to respect and speak in Castilian” (“a ser gente, saber respetar y hablar en castellano”) (Courthès 1999, p. 9).

8. The dialect maps in Berta Elena Vidal del Battini’s *The Spanish of Argentina [El Español de la Argentina]* (1966) illustrate the linguistic singularity of Santiago del Estero in the general context of Argentine Spanish.

<sup>9</sup> See Nardi (2002) and Alderetes (2001). The first reference comprises the grammatical notes from a course given by Ricardo Nardi on Santiagueño Quichua. The notes were compiled after his death by Lelia Albarracín, Mario Tebes, and Jorge Alderetes.

10. Dargoltz (1980) suggests that the socioeconomic context—the creation of the railroad, the destruction of natural resources, and the boom of the sugar industry in Tucumán—accelerated the Santiagueño exodus.

11 It is important to also note the studies carried out by Milton Azevedo on the dialectal representation of Catalan, Spanish, and Portuguese in literature (Azevedo, 1994, 2002).



12. The minimal perceptual prominence of syntax for the interlocutor and the reader works against the possibility of Quichua interference in the Spanish of the novel. This does not mean that the author is not aware of it; indeed, his knowledge of the Santiaguero linguistic reality is broadly demonstrated in the more realistic passages in the novel. See Courthès (1999).

13. The failure to italicize 'pichana' an object of domestic use is interpreted as indicative of a Hispanicism that has already been completely incorporated into the language; cf. Santiaguero Quichua *pichay* 'to sweep \*barrer+', *pichana* 'broom \*escoba+' (Alderetes, 2001, p. 294).

14. *pillar*, 'to surprise \*sorprender+'. Note the use of

quotation marks to indicate colloquial language.

15. The placement of a definite article before a personal name is common in many Argentine Spanish varieties, but not found in the Rio de Plata variant.

16. The text contains numerous commentaries whose objective is to instruct the reader. For example, "Early in the morning, to let the children know what time to come to school, the teacher raises (*iza*) the flag, *flagizar* means raising the flag, *arriar* means to lower the flag. Shunko already knows that." ("De mañana, para avisar a los chicos que es hora de venir a la escuela, el maestro *iza* la bandera, *izar* quiere decir subir la bandera, *arriar* quiere decir bajar la bandera. Shunko ya sabe eso.") (p. 78)

17. Italics are used in the novel.