

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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# SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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*Edited by*

ROBERT BAYLEY,  
RICHARD CAMERON,  
*and*  
CEIL LUCAS

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## CHAPTER 30

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# LANGUAGE POLICY AND IDEOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA

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RAINER ENRIQUE HAMEL

To approach language policies in Latin America entails investigating how different peoples, emerging nations, ethnolinguistic groups, or other social aggregates use the differences between languages and varieties of languages to (1) construct their group identities, (2) distinguish themselves from the “others,” and (3) build power structures. One strand of research focuses on the construction of Spanish and Portuguese as independent national languages, a process related to nation building after Independence at the beginning of the nineteenth century that extended well into the twentieth century. However, most language policy research belongs to a second strand: the relation of Spanish and Portuguese as colonial and national languages to indigenous and immigrant languages. A third topic area, which has received less attention, involves policies toward the teaching and values of foreign languages, which overlaps with the focus on some European immigrant languages, such as English, French, German, and Italian.

The most significant areas where language politics become salient and language policies intervene are in the domains of societal multilingualism. Two different types of linguistic communities in Latin America have created their own domains of bilingual communication, including bilingual education: indigenous and immigrant communities. Both communities exist as bilingual enclaves in socio-historic formations of nation-state building processes. These processes are oriented by European models of linguistic and cultural homogeneity that seek to

assimilate those who are different. In most Latin American countries, the dominant language ideology expects their citizens to be monolingual speakers of the national language and, in the middle and upper classes, to have some command of a foreign language. Those who speak *other mother tongues* arouse suspicions about their national loyalty, even if they are equally proficient in the country's language. Foreign languages are welcome as long as they do not possess a territorial base, which often assigns a conflicting status to languages like Italian or German.

Areas and traditions that practice natural plurilingualism are excluded or hidden from public recognition and its discourses. Among them are indigenous areas in the rain forest that exhibit extraordinary linguistic diversity where people naturally speak four languages or more. Similarly, both indigenous urban multilingualism, which has increased over the past decades due to migration into the big cities, and existing immigrant language enclaves are basically kept invisible in the constructed image of modern states and their metropolises.

In sum, instances of societal multilingualism are viewed as an exception in Latin America, even more so in the "imagined community" of the nation than in communicative practice. Any stable bilingual community—indigenous or immigrant—faces adverse sociolinguistic conditions and will have to develop specific ideological, cultural and linguistic justifications for the preservation of its bilingual domains.

Fundamental contradictions often persist between the states' overt language policies and planning, and the impulses and orientations of vigorous societal forces. During colonial and early republican times, the state pressure for assimilation and the eradication of indigenous languages was resisted in regions of massive indigenous population or isolated areas. Conversely, modern governmental policies that foster diversity and enrichment perspectives today meet strong resistance both from mainstream society and from indigenous teachers and parents who sometimes oppose bilingual education because they deeply internalized the dominant ideology of monolingualism (Hamel 2008a, 2008b).

To interpret the complex field of language policies in Latin America requires a conceptual framework broader than the traditional models of language policy, planning, or management which typically reduce their object to overt state interventions designed to change the "natural" course of language development. Rather, language policies will be understood in this framework as sociohistorical processes that change language constellations (i.e., whole systems of communication) where state institutions and other social forces intervene. Such a process implies a transformation of discursive and linguistic structures and uses (e.g., standardization, diffusion, shift, or revitalization). More fundamentally, it also entails a change in the language ideologies and a change in the relationships that speakers maintain with the prevailing language constellations in shared territories as part of overall power relations (see Hamel 2008c, 2010 for a broader discussion).

Within this historical perspective, we can identify three ideological orientations to language and cultural politics in Latin America that correspond to historical phases but survive at the same time as competing positions today (see figure 30.1).



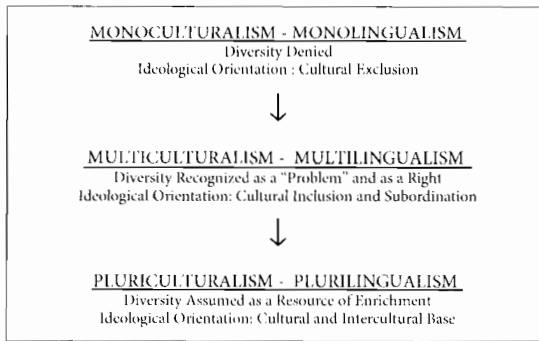


Figure 30.1. Ideological orientations in language and cultural policy

Colonialism developed *monoculturalism* and *monolingualism* as the dominant position that was reinforced by the nascent republics after Independence. This orientation denied the indigenous populations the right to exist as distinct ethnic peoples, for example, in nineteenth-century Argentina and Chile, or it erased its presence and visibility, as happened in Brazil after the early colonial period. This ideology has been challenged since the beginning of the twentieth century by a competing orientation that I want to frame as *multiculturalism* and *multilingualism*. These orientations acknowledge the existence of ethnic minorities but define diversity negatively as a problem (“the Indian problem”). The cultural and linguistic expressions of indigenous and other minorities are recognized both as a problem *and* as a right, and their existence is seen as a barrier to national unity (see Ruiz 1984 for a different conceptualization). *Pluriculturalism* and *plurilingualism* represent a third orientation based on an enrichment perspective. This vision shares with multiculturalism a similar recognition of factual diversity but differs in its valuation. Diversity is considered an asset and potential cultural capital for the nation as a whole. It is grounded in a cultural base theory as laid down in the theoretical foundations of intercultural education (Monsonyi & Rengifo 1983).

All three orientations are still present and compete in contemporary society. Multilingualism is probably hegemonic but is losing force in many countries. The fundamental question today is how to move from a multilingual and multicultural orientation that recognizes diversity but regards it as a problem to a plurilingual and pluricultural enrichment perspective within the broader context of societal transformations in Latin America.

In this chapter I focus primarily on language policies in the domains of bi- and multilingualism and the associated language ideologies that contrast mono- and multilingual with plurilingual orientations. Since education is no doubt the single most salient arena of these controversies, I will concentrate on the ways in which language policies and ideologies intervene in the educational systems and options in Latin America. First, I will outline the history and some general characteristics of the indigenous and the immigrant educational settings with regard to the macrolevel of policy and the microlevel of curriculum. I will

then look at some basic differences as well as shared problems and solutions in order to develop an integrated interpretation of language and education policy in Latin America. Next, I will explore what solutions different countries and regions offer to the challenges of globalization, from new foreign language policies and primary education bilingual programs to South American integration based on massive bilingualism of the main state languages.

## INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE POLICY AND EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

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I will not engage here in the debate about language classification and competing typologies. My data stem from the most recent authoritative sociolinguistic atlas (Sichra 2009) and from an up-to-date survey on indigenous education in Latin America (López 2009). In 2009 slightly less than 30 million indigenous citizens, speaking well over 500 languages, lived in Latin America. An extreme diversity of numbers, demographic density, linguistic and sociolinguistic differentiation, and degrees of assimilation characterize their present ways of life. Taking into account this heterogeneity, it is possible to distinguish three main groupings among Amerindian peoples.

Over 80 percent of the indigenous population is concentrated in two macro-ethnoses located in the areas where highly differentiated societies existed before the European conquest. One occupies the *Mesoamerican plateau* containing central and southeast Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. Some 80 languages are spoken by this ethnic family, modern Náhuatl (1.4 million speakers) and modern Mayan languages (6.2 million speakers) being the most important ones. The other macro-ethnos is located in the *Andean area*, which stretches from the south of Columbia to the north of Chile, including Argentina (north), Bolivia, Chile (north), Colombia (south), Ecuador, and Peru. Here two languages, Quechua (12 million speakers) and Aymara (3 million speakers) are dominant.

The second grouping is subdivided into more than 300 languages whose speakers are scattered over the whole of the Latin American territory. Their main areas of residence are located in Central America (except Guatemala and Belize), the Caribbean coast of South America, the Amazonian basin, and the extreme south of the continent. Different from the first, this ensemble of Amerindian micro-ethnoses is characterized by low demographic density, high linguistic diversity, and a wide variety of stages on the continuum of assimilation that range from still fairly isolated hunter and collector societies to almost fully assimilated groups.

The third and relatively new grouping is growing fast at the expense of the other two: it comprises the urban indigenous population of several million that

share the living conditions of the urban sub-proletariat dwelling in the huge shantytowns that surround Latin American big cities.

From the beginning of the Conquest in 1492, two colonialist strategies—assimilation versus subordinate preservation of indigenous peoples—developed and materialized in education and the teaching of Spanish or Portuguese. These continue today. The first strategy aimed at linguistic and cultural assimilation through direct imposition of the national language, leading to submersion or fast transitional programs. The second strategy involved transitional and some exceptional maintenance programs. In most cases, diverse bilingual methods were introduced, where the Indian languages played a subordinate role as languages of instruction and initial alphabetization.

Today, the debate about indigenous education centers around two fundamental issues. On the macro-political and anthropological level, a powerful alternative to assimilation has emerged that strives for the transformation of the existing nation states into plurilingual and pluricultural polities who should approach existing diversity from an enrichment perspective. This orientation proposes that autochthonous First Nations, African descent, and European heritage participate as three distinct roots in the forging of a new type of nation and of Latin American integration that should reconcile national unity with the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity.

The second issue refers to the micro-political dimension of curriculum and the cultural, pedagogical, and linguistic organization of the schools. In view of previous failures with submersion and fast transitional programs, a number of new modalities have emerged since the 1970s. In most countries, bilingual and bicultural programs designed to help preserve and foster indigenous languages gave way to the new concept of “intercultural bilingual education” (IBE) in the early 1990s except in Colombia, which preserves its definition of “ethno-education” (see table 30.1).

Content matters and competencies from indigenous funds of knowledge, as well as from national programs, should be integrated into a culturally and pedagogically appropriate curriculum, giving priority to the indigenous content and worldviews to redress historical imbalance. First, children should know and appropriate their own culture in order to build a solid base of competencies, values and ethnic identity (the intracultural component). They should then proceed to learn content matters from the national and global societies in order to integrate knowledge and competencies from several sources without diluting them (the intercultural component).

Under the label of “intercultural education for all,” a relationship of mutual understanding and respect should involve the countries’ whole school population. Mainstream students are supposed to learn about indigenous cultures right from the start and are expected to develop positive values toward diversity through a process of knowing, recognizing, and valorizing the other cultures (Gallardo et al. 2005). In areas of high indigenous population density, these students should learn one of the indigenous languages of the region in

Table 30.1. Indigenous peoples, population, and languages in Latin America

Country and date of latest national census	Total national population	Indigenous peoples	Indigenous population		Indigenous languages	Political status of indigenous languages
			#	%		
<b>Argentina (2001)</b>	36,260,160	30	600,329	1.6	15	Languages of education
<b>Belize (2000)</b>	232,111	4	38,562	16.6	4	-----
<b>Bolivia (2001)</b>	8,090,732	36	5,358,107	66.2	33	Co-official with Spanish
<b>Brazil (2000)</b>	169,872,856	241	734,127	0.4	186	Languages of education
<b>Chile (2002)</b>	15,116,435	9	692,192	4.6	6	Languages of education
<b>Colombia (2005)</b>	41,468,384	83	1,392,623	3.3	65	Co-official with Spanish
<b>Costa Rica (2000)</b>	3,810,179	8	65,548	1.7	7	-----
<b>Ecuador (2001)</b>	12,156,608	12	830,418	6.8	12	Official regional use
<b>El Salvador (2007)</b>	5,744,113	3	13,310	0.2	1	-----
<b>French Guyana (1999)</b>	201,996	6	3,900	1.9	6	Languages of education
<b>Guatemala (2002)</b>	11,237,196	24	4,487,026	39.9	24	National languages
<b>Guyana (2001)</b>	751,223	9	68,819	9.1	9	Languages of education
<b>Honduras (2001)</b>	6,076,885	7	440,313	7.2	6	Languages of education
<b>Mexico (2010)</b>	112,322,757	67	6,695,228	6.0	64	National languages
<b>Nicaragua (2005)</b>	5,142,098	9	292,244	5.7	6	Of official regional use
<b>Panama (2000)</b>	2,839,177	8	285,231	10.0	8	Languages of education
<b>Paraguay (2002)</b>	5,163,198	20	108,308	2.0	20	Guarani as co-official
<b>Peru (2008)</b>	28,220,764	43	3,919,314	13.9	43	Of official regional use
<b>Surinam (2006)</b>	436,935	5	6,601	1.5	5	-----

Country and date of latest national census	Total national population	Indigenous peoples	Indigenous population		Indigenous languages	Political status of indigenous languages
			#	%		
Uruguay (2004)	3,241,003	0	115,118	3.5	0	-----
Venezuela (2001)	23,054,210	37	534,816	2.3	37	Co-official with Spanish
Latin America	479,754,341	661	29,491,090	6.1%	557	

Source: Adapted and updated from López (2009: 3)

Bolivia, Mexico, and some other countries (Albó & Anaya 2004; López 2005, 2009; Schmelkes 2006).

A more radical discourse has emerged since the end of the twentieth century, especially in Bolivia and Ecuador, which proposes *decolonization* of society and education to overcome the historical submission of indigenous culture and exclusion of its funds of knowledge. It demands the recognition of equal status for both worldviews and of epistemic rights for indigenous peoples, that is, the right to produce authoritative knowledge and the power to propose it (Quijano 2000).

Which curriculum and pedagogical approach and what functional language distribution will be able to integrate overall cultural and linguistic aims with academic achievement and empowerment in the context of prevailing asymmetric power relations?

The officially adopted intercultural, bilingual model establishes the right to mother-tongue literacy and content teaching, plus Spanish or Portuguese as a second language for students who have an indigenous language as their first language (L1). The indigenous languages should be taught as second language (L2), where the European language is the students' stronger language (Albó 2002). No doubt such a curriculum would be more appropriate, both from a pedagogical and psycholinguistic perspective, and from the standpoint of the official goals of language maintenance and cultural development. However, historical discrimination and a pervasive diglossic ideology deeply rooted in both mainstream and indigenous teachers' and parents' attitudes raise high barriers against implementation. Although proposals based on research about the common underlying proficiency and the transfer hypothesis were introduced since the 1980s (Hamel 1988; López 1995, 2005), they could overcome resistance only in exceptional cases. Especially in the Andean and the Mesoamerican macro-areas, cultural and language maintenance education does not yet constitute a solid, well-organized, and accepted educational practice. The most widespread modality still is transitional "Castillanization," which teaches literacy and content areas in Spanish and makes use of indigenous languages as the

initial medium of instruction where necessary (Hamel 2008b). By and large, indigenous education still contributes more to ongoing language shift and loss than to maintenance and revitalization.

In contrast to official and mainstream education, an increasing number of experimental school projects and other local initiatives have engaged in new ways of improving indigenous education since the 1980s. They establish novel relations between academic achievement and bilingual language use. Most experimental projects claim as their goal the maintenance or revitalization of Indian cultures and languages. Paradoxically, they comply much more appropriately with the new laws of educational and linguistic rights, as well as with the official IBE programs, than does *de facto* mainstream indigenous education. Notwithstanding this, they are regarded as marginal or experimental both inside and outside the system.

## FROM IMMIGRANT TO ELITE BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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The history of European and, to a lesser extent, Middle East and Asian immigration to Latin America is well documented. I will limit my analysis to linguistic groups other than speakers of Spanish and Portuguese. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay absorbed about 90 percent of the European immigration to Latin America. During the period of massive immigration (1875–1930), Spaniards and Italians represented the largest immigrant groups in most countries, followed by the British, Germans, Polish, Yugoslavians (mainly Croatians), and French. Throughout that time, about 1.5 million Italians migrated to Argentina; and 1.5 million to Brazil. More than 100,000 British citizens (mainly Welsh and Irish) and about 120,000 Germans settled in Argentina, 250,000 Germans in Brazil, and 200,000 in Chile (see Baily & Miguez 2003). For 1990, estimates establish some 500,000 German speakers and almost 12 million citizens of German descent in Brazil, 300,000 speakers and one million descendants for Argentina, and 20,000 speakers out of 200,000 descendants for Chile.

In Argentina, rapid and pacific assimilation in the cities and the construction of a national identity based on Argentine Spanish monolingualism was largely due to the integrative force of Argentina's impressive socioeconomic development and to the high academic level of public education (Axelrud 1999). Lower-class Italians and Poles assimilated more rapidly than middle-class British, French, or Germans. In rural areas, in contrast, European migrants formed large enclave communities that preserved their ethnolinguistic loyalty into the second half of the twentieth century.

In all Latin American countries, mainly the British (English, Welsh, and Irish), as well as French-, and German-speaking settlers, founded their own schools and other social institutions to preserve their languages, traditions, and endogamic kinship relations. Most of these schools went through three historical phases, and some of them reached a fourth stage. They were founded as monolingual community or heritage language schools in the nineteenth century or early twentieth century to provide the children of the settlers with appropriate education, especially in rural areas where no other schooling was available. Teaching was conducted entirely in the immigrant language in most cases, and students from outside the community were rarely admitted.

In a second phase, settlers brought over teachers from their heritage countries, and the national language was introduced almost as a foreign language to provide the language skills necessary in dealing with the external society. Content matters were usually taught entirely in the immigrant language to foster language maintenance. In their third phase, immigrant schools gradually weakened their character of being enclave and ethnic community schools and joined the group of national elite schools, opening their doors to the children of the countries' economic and power elites. Although many alumni became leading public personalities over time, those schools with formal support from their countries of origin never lost their ambiguous status of being considered both national *and* foreign. Due to shrinking numbers of immigrants and ongoing language shift, education in these schools gradually became bilingual. Two convergent processes triggered significant changes in curriculum and language policy. As the immigrant schools became attractive to the national elites, they had to offer a curriculum that could satisfy the educational needs of their new customers. At the same time, general education laws promulgated during the last quarter of the nineteenth century established requirements for private institutions that sought state recognition and certification. The increasingly nationalist governments wanted to establish a new power relationship by extending their control over those schools, to cultivate patriotism among their students and thus contribute to the assimilation of the immigrant communities.

Permanent negotiations and the attempt to conciliate sometimes divergent orientations led to a wide array of bilingual curricula. Today, some schools teach the national syllabus as the core curriculum and the foreign language area as an extracurricular program. In most cases, a dual system of parallel curricula developed in each language, each with its own faculty and management. The schools have to hire teachers with quite different qualifications for each language and content area (Banfi & Day 2004). Very often, the requirements of each system increase the study load and unnecessarily double certain content matters taught in both languages. Many schools established segregated tracks, separating the descendents of immigrants as native speakers from students who learn the immigrant language as a foreign language.

In sum, many of the private bilingual schools basically combine two types of approaches. The bilingual immigrant students are exposed to a strong

component of L1 literacy development and content teaching, whereas the monolingual national-language group is often schooled in immersion or strong L2 programs in the foreign language at entrance level. These syllabuses integrate the advantages of L1 development in one case and immersion in the immigrant/foreign language in the other as a means of developing highly proficient bilingualism within an enrichment perspective. Once an advanced threshold level of proficiency in both languages is achieved, the two cohorts can be integrated in a number of content areas that may be taught in either language.

In a fourth phase, those schools associated with prestigious and internationally powerful language communities developed into “global language schools” (Banfi & Day 2004) during the second half of the twentieth century. The era of globalization that began in the 1970s, which imposed a drastic reduction of state expenditures, severely affected public education and damaged a long history of outstanding quality and humanistic tradition in public education in the more developed countries. The decline in public education increased the relevance of international bilingual schools as part of the small group of elite institutes that offer modern, international technology and curriculum together with class segregation and the promise of molding the future leaders of business and politics at national and international level. Only those former heritage schools that were able to keep pace with the dynamics of swift globalization could compete with other top private schools for the offspring of the economic and political elite. In the neoliberal era, high-quality education has become an expensive commodity.

The transition from dual-language schools still rooted in their immigrant communities to modern, elite schools with strong links to global educational development is still under way (de Mejía 2008). A central asset when competing with other private elite schools is the global language schools’ intensive plurilingual programs that are offered to students right from the start, with exchange and study-abroad opportunities in industrialized countries and improved studying and job opportunities for graduates. International degrees like the renowned International Baccalaureate add a cutting edge to the value of these institutions. Schools representing international languages in decline, such as French, German, or Japanese, offer English as a strong third language and advertise themselves as trilingual schools.

Elite bilingual schools share a model of enrichment plurilingualism as a societal perspective and additive bi- or multilingualism as an individual goal. None of the languages involved is under threat or stigmatized as inadequate for advanced content teaching or communication. And students are systematically encouraged, awarded, and recognized for the bi- or trilingual competence they develop in the world’s “good” languages.

In the process of gradually integrating their communities into the host country’s society, immigrant bilingual schools became a significant force for national development, in some cases providing models for the design of the public school system. At the same time, their development occasionally led to conflict and



constant negotiation with national educational authorities. Both aspects—diverse educational cultures and programs as well as integration and reciprocal transfer—have shaped their identities and roles. The fact that plurilingualism was established as a visible and positive trademark in a domain of social prestige helped to introduce an enrichment perspective and to mitigate Latin American policies of building homogeneous and monolingual nation states.

## DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN INDIGENOUS AND ELITE BILINGUAL EDUCATION: INTEGRATION AND CONFLICTING ORIENTATIONS

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The two systems under review certainly have little in common in terms of their socioeconomic context. They are located at the polar extremes of rich and poor. In most studies of educational outcomes, these differences are identified as basic determinants of achievement gaps. Whereas *immersion* education typically produces high achievement in elite schools, *submersion* leads to poor results in indigenous education. These striking disparities can be explained in terms of social-class differences and their consequences for overall quality, additive versus subtractive orientations, and the prestige attached to the languages involved.

Despite fundamental differences in a range of aspects, however, a number of sociolinguistic and curricular phenomena related to the languages involved in each system allow for cautious comparison. I will focus on a variety of challenges that could be subsumed under the heading of *integration*. Both systems exhibit problems of integration on various levels: (1) the internal integration of curriculum and school communities; (2) the national integration or indeed segregation from the country's political and cultural context; and (3) the integration into a global community of education and other international networks.

### Elite Bilingual Schools

One significant challenge that affects most elite bilingual schools is internal integration, that is, how to incorporate languages, content matters, teaching methods into a well-structured curriculum. From the beginning, students often have to struggle with the implementation of two national curricula and separate teaching faculty who frequently are not fully bilingual and know little about the "other" language and curriculum. Such segregation runs counter to

any pedagogical teaching strategy of integrating content and language learning. This also casts doubt on the soundness of an orientation toward additive bilingualism and enrichment biculturalism and it limits national integration of elite bilingual education (EBE) schools.

Conversely, global integration emerges as a decisive force in an era of national disintegration and internationalization. In fact, EBE in Latin America increasingly incorporates its members into the emerging global arena, creating new de-territorialized "third cultures." International networks encompass global management customs, the international community of science and technology, fashion, music, and other fields of culture, with their own discourses and language uses.

Although at first sight national and international integration may appear to be mutually exclusive targets, a pluralistic orientation of cultural and linguistic enrichment and intercultural learning could point to ways in which both objectives reinforce each other. In terms of language choice, they could open up a truly global arena where English plays a significant role, but plurilingualism is the main goal. Several languages could be included in their programs in flexible combinations.

## Indigenous Education

Problems and challenges of integration emerge for indigenous education as well, though in different ways. Most countries in Latin America possess a national curriculum that engages in a complex relationship with the curriculum needs and practices of IBE for indigenous populations. Education and language planning for such programs pose problems that can be traced to similar levels of internal, external, or national and international integration.

As a consequence of structural tensions between the national curriculum and local needs, a number of contradictions arise for the internal integration of the intercultural and bilingual component of IBE. Content matters and competencies from indigenous funds of knowledge and world views, as well as from national programs, have to be integrated in a culturally and pedagogically adequate fashion. To design the appropriate curriculum, indigenous funds of knowledge need to be identified, recovered from oblivion and fragmentation, and systematized to serve as the pedagogical input for the indigenous part of the curriculum. The successful integration of such an intercultural curriculum presents significant challenges for curriculum design (Hamel 2009; López 2009). It has to avoid imbalance, unsuitable misrepresentation of indigenous knowledge funds via "Western" systematization and dichotomized juxtaposition. As we have seen, the role and the functional integration of the two languages and strategies for their teaching in diverse sociolinguistic conditions posit similar, yet unsolved, problems.

Similarly, the external or national integration of IBE still presents a number of unsolved challenges. To attend the specific local needs, an appropriate IBE

curriculum requires a substantial degree of independence from the national curriculum, which is matter of conflict and negotiation. Some countries like Brazil, Colombia, or Venezuela allow advanced autonomy on the basis of a minimal common core, whereas countries like Mexico or Argentina impose the national curriculum with only slight adaptations.

Contrary to traditional stereotypes, indigenous communities participate actively in the process of globalization in various ways. International migration has become the hope of survival for millions of Indians throughout Latin America. Many migrants reinforce their ethnic identity and language use in their host countries in Latin America, the United States, or Europe, where they build up lively transnational, often trilingual communities and strengthen their ethnic citizenship. Their experiences abroad by themselves constitute powerful processes of education, learning, and reorientation for adults and children. Schools in both the home nations and the host countries reveal considerable difficulties and resistance when adapting to the new circumstances and needs of migrants, in general. They are even less prepared to deal with indigenous migration.

Increasingly, indigenous communities in Mexico demand multilingual education, including English, since they know that their destiny will take them northward across the border. Although educational authorities oppose such demands as disruptive, the migrants themselves show the pathways for innovation when they creatively integrate their own languages plus Spanish and English into a powerful communicative repertoire.

## **FROM NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES TO PLURILINGUAL POLICIES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION: IMMIGRANT VERSUS FOREIGN LANGUAGES, REGIONAL VERSUS GLOBAL INTEGRATION**

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Since independence, foreign-language policies in most Latin American countries have developed in close relationship to the construction of a homogenous nation-state, as I explained earlier. They reflected generalized interest in Europe and the influence of the main immigrant groups. Foreign-language learning was limited to the small elite that had access to secondary and tertiary education.

The most prestigious European languages offered in public education coincide with the presence of immigrant groups of French, English, Italian, and German origins. However, the official reasoning behind teaching these

curriculum requires a substantial degree of independence from the national curriculum, which is matter of conflict and negotiation. Some countries like Brazil, Colombia, or Venezuela allow advanced autonomy on the basis of a minimal common core, whereas countries like Mexico or Argentina impose the national curriculum with only slight adaptations.

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The most prestigious European languages offered in public education coincide with the presence of immigrant groups of French, English, Italian, and German origins. However, the official reasoning behind teaching these

languages has usually been of an instrumental nature, without reference to these immigrant groups, since the general policy supported monolingualism in Spanish or Portuguese. Teaching French was justified given France's cultural weight; English, for its commercial importance; Italian, as the language of law and music; and German, representing philosophy and natural sciences. This ideological distinction between public and private spheres to substantiate language policy reflects a language policy and language ideology divergence that preserves its relevance today. The learning of foreign languages is shaped as a competence that does not relate to any territorial base and represents no threat to the national identity, unity, and loyalty of the nation's citizens as long as it is nobody's first language. The same language, however, when cultivated as the mother tongue and language of identity in immigrant communities, triggers stridently different attitudes and easily arouses deep-seated fears of national disintegration, as is evidenced during the period of immigrant language repression in Brazil between 1935 and 1955.

### **Regional Integration through Widespread Bilingualism**

Since the 1990s, language policy in South America has been challenged by conflicting orientations between global integration via English and regional integration through massive Spanish-Portuguese bilingualism. The language policy of Mercosur (The Common Market of the Southern Cone) is a unique attempt at cultural and geolinguistic integration in the whole region, which reverses long-standing traditions and posits new alternatives for plurilingualism (Hamel 2003). At the beginning of the 1990s, four countries—Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay—joined in a Common Market that should integrate not only their economies but also their peoples and cultures. Portuguese and Spanish were declared the Market's official languages.

Following independence, Argentina and Uruguay developed nationalistic policies that considered Brazil a military and economic menace. Therefore, Portuguese was excluded from learning at school and beyond. On the Brazilian side, the same military doctrine prevailed; Spanish, however, has always been present among the Brazilian elite, but it has played a fairly insignificant role as a foreign language compared to English and French. With the emergence of Mercosur, an integrationist enthusiasm broke out that tore down the historical barriers. All of a sudden, everyone wanted to learn the "other" language on both sides of the linguistic border. A common language policy evolved that pushed for a regional integration based on massive Portuguese-Spanish bilingualism which should be developed as early as possible in public education (Barrios 1996).

This language orientation was contested, however, by more pro-US sectors that favored English over the regional languages in education. Local

language policy experts (Barrios 1996; Arnoux & Bein 1997) suggest that a direct confrontation between the two regional languages and English should be avoided. The official languages of Mercosur should be defined as *languages of integration and participation*, not as *foreign* languages, a conceptual distinction that separates them from English and other foreign languages. To create a new regional identity, a new communication system based on massive receptive bilingualism is encouraged, which ought to allow extensive interaction within the Common Market. The interesting difference with international language communities such as the English-speaking Commonwealth or the Francophonie is that, in the case of Mercosur, integration should not be constructed around *one* hegemonic language but on the basis of a bilingual system of communication and identity building grounded in two languages that have at the same time national, regional, and international status.

The language-policy debate is still not settled at the time of this writing. By 2012, the four member states had established similar regulations obliging each state to offer the “other” language in secondary education without yet making it compulsory. A globalizing influence intervenes through Spain’s imperial policy to aggressively conquer the Spanish language teaching market in Brazil (and in the United States) through its Instituto Cervantes, attempting to push out Brazil’s Hispanic neighbors as the natural language teaching providers and to subordinate Brazilian academia and Spanish teaching faculty (del Valle & Villa 2007).

## Global Orientations: From Limited Plurilingualism to English Only?

In Latin America, the salient foreign language well into the twentieth century was French, followed by English, Italian, and German (Bein 1999; Bertolotti 2003). In many cases, two different European languages were taught throughout secondary school. Given traditionally strong “multilingualism-as-a-problem” orientations in countries with a high percentage of indigenous population, foreign-language learning played a minor role in public education. Mexico, with two thousand miles of borderline with the United States, has until recently developed strikingly little interest and investment in English-language teaching in public education. The comparatively weak position of English in Mexico (Cifuentes et al. 1994) questions simplistic views of linguistic imperialism and language dominance and can only be interpreted as a covert language policy based on Mexican nationalism and deep-seated mistrust of the United States, rooted in Mexican-American history. Beyond specific reasons, as in the Mexican case, habitually low levels of achievement in foreign-language acquisition in many Latin American countries reflect nationalist and ethnocentric traditions shared with European colonial empires. In the past,

advanced foreign-language instruction was to a large extent relegated to private education.

Over the twentieth century, the historical dominance of French and a plurilingual foreign-language policy gave way to the rise of English as the first, and increasingly only, foreign language considered in public education. Although smaller in numbers of learners, other foreign languages still maintain a significant role in elite bilingual schools and in European-language institutions. A new and rapidly growing player in the field is the Chinese Confucius Institute, with some 20 institutions in Latin America in 2009.

## Spanish-English Bilingualism in Primary Education

A growing number of countries try to overcome their deficient foreign-language policy and identify integration into the globalizing process with English teaching. Among them, Colombia and Mexico developed programs to introduce a compulsory foreign language in primary education, which is usually English.

In 2004, Colombia launched the Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo, an ambitious plan to transform Colombia into a bilingual country by 2019. One foreign language, which is *de facto* English, is introduced in primary education. Students should reach a B1 level (threshold or pre-intermediate) by grade 11 as defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In 2012, implementation was still under way in public education. Following initial research (de Mejía & Montes Rodríguez 2008), the program met a number of obstacles, including resistance by teachers, student, and parent communities, especially in lower-class public schools, who argue reduced perspectives of actually using English (de Mejía 2012).

To define what is meant by bilingualism and bilingual education is still an issue in Colombia. The international, elite, bilingual schools, which “use both Spanish and a foreign language as media of teaching and learning” (de Mejía & Montes Rodríguez 2008: 112) no doubt qualify as bilingual schools. A second group of national institutions offers a strong foreign-language component but does not teach content matters in both languages. The two types of schools, of which Colombia has about one hundred, all belong to the private sector. It remains a topic of debate whether bilingualism and bilingual education should be defined by extramural social use of both languages, by content and language-integrated learning or the standards achieved in the second or foreign language. Here and in other contexts, such as the United States, we observe an extension of the term “bilingual education” to contexts that were traditionally labeled as foreign-language teaching. No doubt the line between the two types of language education is blurred today. The main challenge of Colombia’s ambitious program will certainly be to achieve the envisaged standards in English in the public school system, given the lack of trained teachers, the traditionally low levels

of proficiency obtained, the lack of motivation, and even significant resistance to the national program. Here again, we come upon a case where an explicit top-down language policy launched by the government encounters resistance from a largely implicit language policy inherent in the language orientations felt by local communities. A much more diversified, locally grounded language policy that works bottom up is called for, as claimed by Hornberger (1997) and others.

The Mexican government launched an educational reform for its basic education (pre-primary to grade 9) in 2008 (Secretaría de Educación Pública 2010). As a major innovation, it introduces the teaching of “an additional language” in primary education that should continue in secondary schools. In practice “additional language” means English for the general system, where it should be taught from pre-primary grade 3 through the sixth grade of primary (1–6) and three grades of secondary school (7–9), for an average of 100 hours per year (SEP 2010). A B1 level should be attained by the end of ninth grade. In the subsystem of indigenous education, the local indigenous language is to be taught from pre-primary to the seventh grade (first grade of secondary education) for the same amount of time. Neither system envisages systematic content and language integrated learning.

Although implementation is still in its beginnings, a series of conceptual and structural problems are already in sight, of which I will identify only three. Lack of integration of the “additional language” into the curriculum will very likely cause problems in both systems. English will be taught from P3 through the whole period of literacy acquisition. It is difficult to envisage how a foreign language could be taught simultaneously without any integration of content matters and the coordinated development of cognitive academic language proficiency in both languages. This lack of integration becomes even worse in indigenous education, where the national curriculum will develop alongside a specific, non-integrated subject called “indigenous language.” Such an approach implies, first, that the students’ indigenous language has so far not had any curricular place and function in their education. Second, it contradicts existing legal dispositions that establish for indigenous children the linguistic right to have access to education and content matters *through* their language as well as through Spanish. Third and perhaps inadvertently, the language policy behind the new curriculum puts English to compete with the indigenous languages in primary and secondary education. Given the fact that schools from both systems exist side by side in many indigenous and mixed areas, the differentiated additional language teaching is bound to cause conflicts, especially in indigenous areas where up to 50 percent of the economically active population, including their families, face the prospect of migration to the United States. Those who might most urgently need at least basic skills in English to survive abroad will be excluded from English at school. Most likely, pressure will build up to trade indigenous language teaching for English in the indigenous system, a consequence that would further debilitate and pervert intercultural bilingual education.



## PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION AS A TOUCHSTONE FOR PLURICULTURAL STATES

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When we analyse the language policies concerning the different types of societal multilingualism and bilingual education in Latin America, we realize that the common issue that allows for an integrated interpretation is the relationship between the allophone communities, the state, and the dominant society. Conservative nationalist forces still consider multilingualism to be a problem, although certain rights are recognized, and the assimilation of minorities is still their overall goal. For them, ethnolinguistic minorities constitute a threat since their loyalty to the state is questioned. Many of the minorities' members have internalized this hegemonic ideology and exhibit defensive attitudes regarding the legitimacy of their languages. Here, a new language policy needs to be developed to transform the relationship that the dominant *and* the subordinate actors maintain vis-à-vis the prevailing language constellation.

Bilingual communities and their educational institutions at the two poles of societal stratification may contribute significantly to this transformation in their own ways. They can join their voices with those in growing sectors in most Latin American societies who increasingly understand and appreciate diversity as an asset for societal enrichment and the broadening of democracy. In particular, they can demonstrate how the funds of knowledge stemming from their heritage languages and cultures—indigenous or immigrant—make significant contributions and enrich the dominant societies. The undeniable educational leadership of elite bilingual schools in developing enrichment plurilingualism can help to further erode the unsustainable ideologies of mono- or multilingualism. And the unquestionable legitimacy of indigenous claims to be recognized as peoples and to have their linguistic and educational rights respected converges with a growing awareness of indigenous cultural enrichment for the nations. This process may work toward the same goal from a different societal pole.

There can be little doubt that IBE for indigenous peoples will only succeed if pressure to assimilate is removed as a result of significant changes in Latin American societies to embrace a pluricultural enrichment orientation. Such a transition to a pluricultural and plurilingual value system could open new ways of looking at immigrant and global bilingual schools in which heritage language knowledge may be equally considered a valuable resource for the nation as a whole. Furthermore, new light could be shed on the prospect of massive foreign-language learning in public education. Language and education policies for majorities and minorities can no longer be dismissed as marginal components of state policy. They have become a touchstone for appraising the quality of democracy, pluricultural commitment, and the construction of modern states in Latin America and elsewhere in the world.

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