

## **EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND LANGUAGE POLICIES IN CALIFORNIA AND PARAGUAY: PROMOTING OR REPRESSING BILINGUALISM?**

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### **Preface**

During World War II, the United States was able to win important battles against the Japanese because among the American soldiers there were some American Indians who spoke Navajo –an indigenous language. Using the Navajo language as a base, the military developed a code for transmitting messages that the Japanese could not interpret. This historical episode is celebrated in *Wind talkers*, one of the movies of the summer 2002.

In a similar way, in the wars Paraguay has had with its neighbors, Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina, the unique language characteristic of the Paraguayan men, that of speaking Guaraní, has also been a valuable asset to that country's armed forces.

Do these two countries value their language resources (Ruiz, 1984)? Are their schools engaged in supporting their language diversity? What does bilingualism mean to a country? On the face of the above two examples, the United States and Paraguay would appear value these languages highly. The fact is each is a minoritized language in its own country.

### **1. Introduction**

In the recent past, previously marginalized languages around the world have gained valuable political ground as shifts in governing orientations have occurred. In many places the education systems are a major vehicle through which governing bodies can implement language policy. In turn, the education system, with its own set of structures and its relationship to societal belief systems, can assist or constrain the ease

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with which policy can be enacted. Whether the language policy changes are overt or covert, these changes almost always challenge the status quo.

In some parts of the world, along with the demand for language recognition and language rights, demands for equity in schools and the work world have arisen. Add to these two twentieth century developments a third phenomenon, the huge numbers of people migrating from one country to another, and we have a fervent mixture of issues interacting with each other.

How should a country go about addressing this cluster of issues?

Bilingualism scholars have long reminded us that any discussion of language use in the schools must begin with the sociopolitical context of the particular school system. Among those who have alerted us to this requirement are Fishman (1966), Kjolseth (1983), Hernández-Chávez (1984), Ruiz (1984) and Skutnabb-Kangas (1988). More recently, Fishman, in his *In praise of the Beloved Language* (1996) has again written that language policies intended to change the relationships between languages in contact requires a plan with two basic aspects: The planning for *status change* and one of the *corpus*. We find that *normalización* and work on the *normativa* are the terms used in Spain for covering these two complementary constructs (Valadez, McSwan & Martínez, 2000). Fishman reminds us that an examination of societal ideologies and philosophical orientations should precede curricular questions.

By studying how two countries are doing with these challenges we can appreciate the degree to which the above theories may be supported.

In this paper we address the dynamics of the current language policy debates in Paraguay and the United States, looking particularly at how these debates play out in the schools. For the United States we have selected to study the case of California.

Why the United States and Paraguay?

These two countries are very different in many important dimensions. However, they also share important similarities when we address their issues of language and schooling. Both the United States and Paraguay have large populations with insufficient language fluency in its respective prestige language to receive instruction in that language effectively. These countries also share ambivalence towards bilingualism, contrary to official policies of Paraguay. Several scholars have addressed the

inconsistencies in language policies in the United States (Molesky, 1986; Tollefson, 1991; Kroskrity, 2000).

## 2. Objective

The objective of this paper is to exemplify aspects of theories of language planning and language ideologies against questions of second language acquisition and curriculum development. The following is the structure of our presentation for each country:

1. Goals with respect to its student population.
2. Linguistic profile.
3. Language policies and language planning.
4. Curricular responses for Second Language Acquisition and Bilingualism.
5. Assessment of goal attainment.

## 3. Paraguay

### 3.1. Goals for its student population

Paraguay is a land-locked country of seven million inhabitants<sup>2</sup> in the middle of the South American continent. School is obligatory to the ninth grade, approximately to age 14. In 2002 the number of students enrolled was 1,615,365. The net enrollment included 75% of those eligible at *Educación Inicial* (lower elementary), 71% in *Educación E. Básica* (upper elementary), and 40% in *Educación Media* (secondary school).

This figures are a significant advancement from those of 1981 when 80% of the children barely completed third grade. Only 11% finished high school. (Valadez, 1984). Numerous official documents declare the need of Paraguay to have a schooled population.

### 3.2. The language profile of the population

Language proficiency. There appear to be no official figures on the language proficiency<sup>3</sup> of the student population. However, Galeano de Cardozo and Genes,

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<sup>2</sup> 1992 *Censo de Población y Viviendas* was 5,000,000. The 2002 Census is estimated to be 7,000,000, not confirmed as of this publication.

<sup>3</sup> Galeano de Cardozo and Genes report that SNEPE (*Sistema Nacional de Evaluación y Promoción Escolar en el Paraguay*) is a unit which is responsible for obtaining these figures, but the official figures have not been published to date.

members of the *Comisión Nacional de Bilingüismo* summarize the school principals report that most of the children arrive at school speaking only guaraní or mainly guaraní with a little bit of Spanish. These two groups, which would be monolinguals in Guarani or near monolingual Guarani speakers, are estimated to comprise 88% of the student population. The following percentages are shared by the reports of the *Comisión Nacional de Bilingüismo*<sup>4</sup>.

Language Fluency of Paraguayan Children at Onset of Schooling, School Principals' Estimate (2002).

Language(s)	Percentage
Monolingual Guarani	37.2%
Guarani Dominant with a little bit of Spanish	50.8%
Equally fluent in Guarani and Spanish	7.8%
Spanish Dominant with a little bit of Guarani	3.6%
Portuguese	3%
Other language(s)	3%
Total	100.0%

Source: Galeano de Cardozo & Genes, *Comisión Nacional de Bilingüismo, Paraguay* (2002).

Linguistic Profile for Paraguay, total population<sup>5</sup>.

Language proficiency	Percentage of the population
Monolingual in Guarani	39%
Bilingual in Guarani and Spanish	49%
Monolingual in Spanish	6.4%
Total	94.4%

Source: Torres de Romero (2001).

### 3.3. Language policies and language planning for SLA and Bilingualism in Paraguay

Official language policy. In post-Stroessner Paraguay, the 1992 Constitution addresses Paraguay's goals with respect to bilingualism directly. Articles 140 and 77 address the language issues as they pertain to schooling.

Artículo 140. El Paraguay es un país pluricultural y bilingüe. Son idiomas oficiales el castellano y el guaraní. La Ley establecerá las modalidades de utilización de

<sup>4</sup> In addition, Torres de Romero (2001) cites the following linguistic profile for the country, referring to the entire population of Paraguay: monolingual in Guarani, 39%; speaking both languages, 49%; monolingual in Spanish, 6.4%.

<sup>5</sup> Torres de Romero (2001).

uno y otro. Las lenguas indígenas, así como las de otras minorías forman parte del patrimonio cultural de la nación<sup>6</sup>.

Artículo 77. La Enseñanza en los comienzos del proceso escolar se realizará en la lengua maternal del educando. Se instruirá asimismo en el conocimiento y en el empleo de ambos idiomas oficiales de la República. En el caso de las minorías étnicas cuya lengua maternal no sea el guaraní, se podrá elegir uno de los dos idiomas oficiales<sup>7</sup>.

### **3.4. Curricular responses for meeting the language goals: educational reform**

Discussion of the current educational situation seems to begin with the Educational Reform installed in 1994<sup>8</sup>. This reform is charged with establishing the school curriculum that would respond to the goals established by the 1992 Constitution. It is in 1994 that the Ministry of Education (MEC<sup>9</sup>) begins the calls for the instruction in Guaraní in the schools with children whose dominant language was Guaraní. In May, 1995, the first author of this paper visited four schools in rural Paraguay where Guaraní was the language of instruction. The principals in these schools reported that some of their fellow principals were not accepting the Guaraní modality because their political leaders were urging them not to change. They were urged to continue Spanish as the language of instruction.

At the same time, there seemed to be uncertainty at the Ministry level as to how to provide guidance for instruction in Guaraní or for general instructional competencies. In the majority, the staff with technical knowledge in the Ministry of Education during the dictatorship was no longer in the Ministry. Private institutions, staffed with personnel who had been in the MEC during the Dictatorship, were training new technical personnel. By 2000 there was a more stable technical staff in the Ministry of Education. Further there were departments within the Ministry that had been created to assist in professional development of the teachers, with an emphasis on language and culture –the areas that had the greatest uncertainty. A number of independent

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<sup>6</sup> Article 140: Paraguay is a pluricultural and bilingual country. Spanish and Guaraní are official languages. The Law will establish the modalities for the use of one and the other. The indigenous languages, as those of other minorities constitute part of the cultural patrimony of the nation.

<sup>7</sup> Article 77: The teaching at the onset of the schooling process will be conducted in the mother tongue of the learner. The learner will likewise be instructed in the knowledge and the use of both official languages of the Republic. In the case of ethnic minorities where the mother tongue is not Guaraní, one of the two official languages may be selected.

<sup>8</sup> The bilingual education efforts of 1981-1984, during the Stroessner period, supported by the United States, at the level of \$4 million dollars, under the Agency for International Development, don't appear in any of the current debates (Valadez, 1984).

organizations, including universities and Guaraní language organizations were providing professional development to teachers in the classrooms.

### 3.5. Assessment of goal attainment at present time (October, 2002)

Schools with Guaraní modality. The country has 6,000 schools. It is estimated that 4,000 should be implementing the Guaraní modality, based on the language dominance of the students. However, in September 2002, there are only 400 schools implementing this modality. In 1998, there had been 472 schools, serving 40,639 students, which were using Guaraní as the primary language of instruction.

In 2001, the MEC and the Banco Internacional de Desarrollo (International Development Bank) published a formative evaluation report written by external reviewer, Mexican researcher Hector Muñoz Cruz. He found strong expressions of resistance towards the Guaraní modality on the part of the parents and on the part of the instructional staff. While 73% of the school principals stated that there had sessions of *sensibilización* directed at parents and teaching staff, there was still resistance. Sixty-eight percent of the principals reported that there was no resistance to implementing the Guaraní modality. Thirty percent indicated resistance.

Principals' stated reasons for resistance:

Parents objection	50%
Objection and lack of preparation on the part of the teachers	28%
Modality was imposed; there was no consultation	5%
Lack of appropriate materials	3.6%

Here is a quote from one of the teachers:

Los alumnos fueron trasladados a otra escuela porque los padres no aceptan, porque dicen que el guaraní entorpece la educación de los niños...

(Muñoz Cruz, 2001: 35)<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, for our analyses, a significant percentage of the teachers had themselves been monolingual Guaraní speakers when they began school:

Teachers' language spoken before starting school:

Guaraní	40.3%
Castellano	5.%
Guaraní and Castellano	54.5%

(Muñoz Cruz, 2001)

<sup>9</sup> Ministerio de Educación y Cultura. This ministry was called Ministerio de Educación y Culto (*Ministry of Education and Faith*) until 1997.

<sup>10</sup> The students were transferred to another school because the parents won't accept (the Guaraní modality), because they say that Guaraní slows down learning by the children.

### 3.6. Present curricular challenges in the carrying out the mandate of the Constitution

Olga de Cardozo, member of the *Comisión Nacional de Bilingüismo*, states the challenges in the following way:

Among the teachers there is a resistance towards the use of Guaraní as medium of instruction. This is due primarily to the lack of awareness of importance of usage of this language (*sensibilización*). In some cases the lack of instructional materials hinders the use of the Guaraní for instruction<sup>11</sup>.

The major challenge in the preparation of instructional materials is the variety of Guaraní that should be used in the schools. There are two positions on this issue:

One Guaraní is labeled academic, which claims the use of Guaraní with a minimum of words and phrases in Spanish that haven't undergone a Guaranization process. The other variety uses the direct incorporation of words and phrases in Spanish within sentences in Guaraní. This language variation is called "jopara"<sup>12</sup>.

Of interest to this discussion is that the debate on incorporation of neologisms and the variety of Guaraní that should be used for instruction has been going on in Paraguay for at least 20 years (Valadez, 1984).

Further, Olga de Cardozo states, "There is no overt incentive for speakers to continue developing their skills with the Guaraní language once they become fluent in Spanish. The public conscious-building for this language has been very poor since it is absolutely necessary for effective participation in all levels of Paraguayan life" (de Cardozo, personal communication by e-mail).

In sum, the implementation of official language policies of Paraguay with respect to the education system has serious challenges, according to the sources consulted. Yet, there is a notable positive difference in the usage and acceptance of Guaraní usage in the public arena, from the observations across the past 20 years, and as Dr. Cordozo alludes to this in her statement that Guaraní is absolutely necessary in all levels of Paraguayan life. The usage of Guaraní is now not hidden or guarded in Public, as it was only a few years ago (personal statements by hotel staff at El Chaco Hotel (2000, 2001) and at Gran Hotel del Paraguay (2003).

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<sup>11</sup> Entre los profesores de las escuelas existe una resistencia para el uso de guaraní como medio de instrucción, mayoritariamente por falta de sensibilización hacia el uso de esa lengua, y en algunas asignaturas por falta de materiales didácticos.

<sup>12</sup> El desafío más grande en la preparación de textos radica en el tipo de guaraní que debe usarse en la escuela. Al respecto hay dos posturas: una académica que pretende el uso del guaraní con una mínima cantidad de palabras y frases en castellano que no hayan pasado por el proceso de guaranización; la otra

## **4. The United States of America**

### **4.1. Goals of the country for its student population<sup>13</sup>**

The general public in the United States has charged the schools to carry out the following goals. These reflect the ideologies that held at the official level. The statements are found in introductory sections of many curriculum guidelines prepared by departments of education at the state level. Teacher training institutions will also use these goals in their orientation for future teachers.

1. Optimal development of the academic abilities of each student.
2. A student body prepared for a productive life in the United States society.
3. A student body whose personal development permits it to participate in an optimal way in a complex society.
4. A student body with high levels of English language attainment in all modalities.

### **4.2. Population diversity and linguistic profile**

In 1542 when the first Europeans arrived to what is now California, no area of similar size in North America had a greater diversity of languages and cultures. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this characteristic is the same; no state in the country has a more diverse population. California is the most populated state, with 34 million persons living in the Golden State, with 32.4 % of these being Latinos (11 million), the largest concentration in percentages and numbers. The Golden State also has the highest number of Asians, 10.9 % (3,697,513) and if we include those who are Asian in combination with other races, this number is 12.3% (4,155,685). This state has the highest number of Native American and Alaska Natives, 333,346 (1.0%). (The largest percentage of this group is found in Alaska, 15% of the state's population). The Census shows the White population diminishing in proportion. The following chart shows some of the numbers for California and the comparison with those of the nation as a whole.

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es la incorporación directa de las palabras y frases en castellano en contextos de oraciones en guaraní, lo que se denomina “jopara”.

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from California State Department of Education (1981). *Basic Principles for the Education of Language Minority Students*.

#### 4.2.1. Population profile for the country

People Quick Facts, US Census 2000	California	USA
<b>Population</b>	<b>33,871,648</b>	<b>281,421,906</b>
Persons under 5 years old, percent	7.3%	6.8%
Persons under 18 years old, percent	27.3%	25.7%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	10.6%	12.4%
White persons, percent, 2000a	59.5%	75.1%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000a	6.7%	12.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native, percent, 2000a	1.0%	0.9%
Asians persons, percent, 2000a	10.9%	3.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2000a	0.3%	0.1%
Persons reporting some other race, percent, 2000a	16.8%	5.5%
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2000	4.7%	2.4%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000b	32.4%	12.5%
White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, percent 2000	46.7%	69.1%

(a) Includes persons reporting only one race.

(b) Hispanics/Latinos can be of any race, therefore are included in applicable race categories.

Source: Adapted from U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

<<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06000.html>>

#### 4.2.2. California language diversity

The languages of Californians and its Student language Profile. The language of California was Spanish while it was part of Mexico. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which sealed the agreements of the Mexican American War included the continued use of Spanish in the territory ceded by Mexico. In fact, the first California constitution ratified after this state became part of the United States was written in both English and Spanish. However, the support for this language, as well as others which are not English, has not been continuous and unchallenged. In the last half of the twentieth century we saw both support and repression of diversity in languages.

#### 4.2.3. Student profile

The language minority population continues to grow. In fact, this population accounted for the entire growth of California in the 1990s. The 2000 Census found that 42.6% of the students in California, ages 5 to 17, spoke a language other than English at

home. This was an increase from 23% in 1980 and 35% in 1990. However, the students in this age range who reported speaking English *less than well* was 13.6%, indicating that students are indeed learning English (Romberger, 2002).

Since schools also evaluate literacy skills when making their classification, the schools numbers of English learners are higher. In 2002, California reported that 20% of their students are English learners. In 2002, Los Angeles Unified School District had 42% of its enrollment in this classification. California enrolled the largest number of English learners in the country, with 1,381,383 students (1997). This number represented 41% of the total reported national English learner enrollment (Macias *et al.*, 1998).

### **4.3. California Curricular responses for addressing student needs**

The FLES movement (Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools), spurred by Sputnik (1958)<sup>14</sup>, and Bilingual Education promoted the study and the use of languages other than English. In 1983, thirty-eight (38) states, including California, had laws supporting bilingual education, where non-English proficient were given instructional assistance in their first language while acquiring English fluency. English speakers were offered the opportunity to add a second language in these programs.

However, although the model of bilingual education was resulting in subtractive bilingualism for most language minority students, accelerating a shift to English, a conservative group promoted the idea that Bilingual education was undermining the supremacy of the English language. An English Only movement gained momentum and in 1987 California voters approved an initiative that limited what the schools might do to support maintenance of first languages which were not English.

Ten years later, the growing number of immigrants, especially from Latin American led to a second anti-bilingualism initiative. In 1998, the voters of California approved the Unz Initiative, Proposition 227. In spite of the fact that the vast majority of bilingual education programs for non-English speaking immigrant students used a transition model, where the goal was to transition the instruction from L1 to English, the Unz Initiative claimed that L1 instruction was keeping the students from acquiring

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<sup>14</sup> A series of 10 artificial satellites launched by the Soviet Union, inaugurating the Space Age. Sputnik 1 was sent into space on Oct. 1957 and it remained in orbit until early 1958. [Source: (1993) *Britannica, Ready References*, (Fifteenth Edition). Chicago, Vol. 11, p. 184].

English. Only one third of the students needing L1 support had been receiving it at the time Proposition 227 was being publicly debated. The new law eliminated many of those programs. However, some districts that had a strong commitment to the academic success of their students applied the conditions allowed in the law to continue first language support in their instruction. In effect, for those few districts, bilingual education continued. Los Angeles Unified and Oxnard Unified are two schools districts in Southern California that continued bilingual instruction in some of their schools. Whereas, school districts that had previously only minimally implemented bilingual education, found Proposition 227 a perfect reason to eliminate their programs.

Other curriculum reforms in California are impacting the degree of academic success for recent immigrant students who are also English Learners. There are strong accountability standards for student gains. The departments of Education at both the Federal and State levels have been impacting the curriculum for all students. In the case of English Learners, these reforms have generally resulted in highly scripted curriculum and extended periods of time preparing for tests.

#### **4.4. Assessment of goal attainment**

Proposition 227 did not improve the rate of acquisition of English, nor was there an increase in the acquisition academic achievement of English Learners. Bilingual teachers are still in high demand in California. There are extensive programs of professional development that are helping teachers be more effective with students who are not fluent in English, such as the California Mathematics Project and California Science Project.

There are threats applied to schools that do not perform at minimal standards. Such schools are categorized as “low performing”. Intense scrutiny is given to these schools, but oftentimes not accompanied with sufficient technical and financial support. Many schools with the large numbers of recent immigrants or with low achievement records are staffed with minimally trained teachers. The school plants where these students attend are sometimes considerably less adequately maintained than those in more affluent parts of town. These inequities have led to parents suing the school districts (Williams vs. State of California, 2004).

## 5. Discussion

By studying the interplay of language policies and their sociopolitical contexts in Paraguay and California, we can appreciate inconsistencies between stated goals at the government levels and the ideologies held by the members of the public carrying out those goals. In Paraguay we find that some educators are still resisting the use of Guaraní as a medium of instruction, whereas others are championing the language for identity and as a base on which to build academic achievement. There are many people and independent groups working very hard to implement a policy of bilingualism for all, girded by the nation's constitution. However, there appears to be no forum for arriving at consensus as to requisite aspects, such as a campaign for getting the general public's support for the use of Guaraní in the schools. The middle class has not been brought into the campaign, as suggested by the case of Catalunya, or the university students as in Galicia (Fishman, 1996; Valadez, McSwan & Martínez, 2000). In Paraguay the project of moving the status of Guaraní to a par with Spanish is hampered by the debates on the *normativa* and on *normalizacion*, the corpus and the status change addressed by Fishman (1996).

In California, bilingualism and language diversity are seen primarily as problems (Ruiz, 1984) by the voters and by policy makers and not as the imperative resources the country needs. Bilingual education had been permitted in the public schools on a limited base, and as a vehicle for accelerating the shift from whatever the L1 might be to English. Only one third of the students needing first language support had been given this assistance. With the advent of Proposition 227, passed by the voters<sup>15</sup> in 1998, two-thirds of those programs were eliminated; English only became the vehicle of instruction, no matter the limitations of proficiency of that language. The people who vote have very little understanding of what bilingual education may be and that the transition model used in the vast majority of the schools has a shift to English as one of its goals. The passing this initiative, the voting public seems to have manifested linguacism, a discrimination towards languages other than the national language, English in this case (Skutnab-Kangas, 1988). It certainly manifested its opposition to the presence of immigrants in the state, in particular to those who speak Spanish.

In both Paraguay and California, the schools and their primary charge of facilitating academic learning are being hampered by the socio-political forces of bilingualism. In these cases we see that societal ideologies and perceived political threats (California) are hampering appropriate curricular approaches.

Our analyses suggest ways of isolating the factors that enhance or detract from coherent curricular plans, be these for changing sociopolitical relationships, for improving academic performance, or for enhancing the importance of language resources within a country.

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<sup>15</sup> The school population of California is comprised of 40% of English learners, but most of the parents of these children cannot vote, because they are not citizens of the United States. Among the voters in Southern California, only 18% have children in the public schools.

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