

LANGUAGE POLICY IN BOLIVIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article distinguishes between language policy and linguistic policies. The first one is also named the politics of language, which interprets the essentials of language diversity as a problem, as rights or as linguistic capital. It analyzes at the national and international level, whereas linguistic policies are the constraints that can be understood from linguistic rights and they follow a certain language policy. These constraints are measures at the intra-national level. Then, the plurilingualism of Bolivia is overt thanks to the recognition of languages at the meso and macro level, say, in the community and in the society.

2. THREE SOCIAL ROLES OF LANGUAGE

The natural languages of the world are used in a society for communication face to face, by telephone or through the mass media. Thus a language is a medium of communication. On one hand, the same languages are useful for constructing identities, say, simultaneously a cultural, a social and/or a personal identity. On the other hand, the languages contextualize role relationships, socially in vertical and horizontal directions, temporal-spatially as the future-in-front (in Spanish/English thinking) or as the future-behind (in Aymara/Quechua thinking), and also notionally, because the languages shape the form and movement of physical things.

2.1. Languages for communication

The first social role of a language is communication. The language serves to interact between a speaker and a hearer. In this way, the hearers compose the audience. According to our study (2011), a bilingual and trilingual audience listens to the radio and watches TV when they stay at home.

Over half of that multilingual audience chooses a vernacular language (Aymara or Quechua) and a vehicular language (Spanish) for listening to the radio and watching television. Under half of the audience listens to the radio and watches TV only in Spanish, which is the vehicular language of Bolivia.

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Both groups (large and small halves) have constructed a dichotomous attitude of a multilingual audience for the mass media. Hence, this multilingual dichotomy means that the bilingual choice is a good option for taking both local/regional and (pluri)national information, in contrast, the monolingual Spanish choice is a second option for receiving indistinctly the local and national information.

2.2. Languages for identity construction

Our research (2011) has found that bilingual and trilingual speakers construct their ethnic identity, associating their native language with the respective indigenous culture. More than two thirds of the trilinguals identify themselves with an indigenous culture. They do not speak only a native language, but they consider themselves as a genuine part of the Aymaran or Quechuan culture. Thus, they transform their native language into an indigenous language.

Likewise, bilingual and trilingual speakers do not always stay as an indigenous group; they take the ethnic identity as a primary factor of the multiple identity. Almost one third of the trilinguals construct their social identity anchored on nationality, in this case, being Bolivian. This sort of identity is made possible by their Spanish language. So, they construct their complementary factor.

In addition, some trilinguals have reached a good proficiency in English who apart from being in the English speech group, they also develop a personal identity linked to their job or profession. This personal identity is the supplementary factor. Thus, they construct their multiple identity, say, ethnic, social and personal one as a whole. So, they could be communital/community speakers and cultural actors, simultaneously social and individual speakers. When the community speakers privilege their ethnic culture they are considered native speakers; meanwhile, if they privilege their foreign language, they are called secondary speakers.

2.3. Languages for pragmatic contextualizing

Following the results of my sociolinguistics thesis (2011) a language could be changed from a formal to informal register or vice versa. This is the case of Spanish as an L2. It can be used by two unknown interlocutors for their formal communication; it can also be used between two friends for their informal conversation.

Apart from more and less formalization the use of "*usted*" (you superior, in Spanish) and of "*tú*" (you inferior, in Spanish) are the social deictic when the conversation is between a boss and a clerk. Just for this reason, Bolivian clerks choose Spanish instead of Aymara or Quechua

at work places. Besides, there is the third term “vos” (you intimate, in Spanish) for communicating face to face between two close friends. This kind of individual language choice is not triglossia; it is a personal praxis with social deixis as a consequence of diglossia. There is another example in English to explain the formal and informal utterances, say, “yes OK”, “yes sir” versus “yeah”, “yes my friend”, which are the individual effect of diglossia³⁶.

Therefore, there are various interpersonal praxes, either vertically “usted-tú” or three horizontal praxes: distant relations “usted-usted”, proximate relations “tú-tú”, and close associations “vos-vos”. We can say the same of “yes” versus “yeah” in English pragmatics. All of them are deictic markers of both pragmatic codes (formal and informal codes).

3. LANGUAGE PERSPECTIVES IN STAGES

Worldwide linguistic habitus has been considered in three perspectives, namely, (1) language as a problem, (2) language as a right, and (3) language as linguistic capital (Ruiz 1984, cited by Baker 1997; Bourdieu 2002). These perspectives do not occur at the same time, but consecutively; so that, they are organized in three stages: the monolingualist stage, the bilingualist stage and the trilingualist one.

3.1. Monolingualist stage

The language planners of several countries, such as Bolivia, United Kingdom, France and others, thought in nineteenth century and in the first half of twentieth, that language diversity was a problem for the country; consequently, bilingual education was a problem, because language planners thought that the pupils would have confusions between the official language (Spanish³⁷, English or French) and their mother tongue, mainly in the learning process of the curriculum content.

During that time, the first solution, for instance in Bolivia, was the exclusion of indigenous language speakers from the political arena, since they were to not be considered citizens, but rather, as part of the Bolivian landscape (Mendoza 2009, pers. com³⁸). The second solution was to give up indigenous languages in the educational system; thus, transitional bilingual education was the best solution to assimilate that population into Spanish.

3.2. Bilingualist stage

³⁶Diglossia means the superposition of two varieties of a language, while triglossia is of three languages.

³⁷Before 2009, Spanish in Bolivia was the official language in fact, but not overtly, in written law.

³⁸Carlos Mendoza is a Bolivian sociologist living in Belgium, who in 2009 shared his experiences related to social changes in Bolivia.

In the last couple decades, the world has changed to another perspective, where the language diversity is a kind of wealth, since the indigenous are already considered citizens. The native language-speaking population must learn the official language as a second language (or L2) in order to exercise their rights as citizens. In addition, they could also maintain their mother tongue. For that reason, Bolivia (1994) officially started Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) through the Educational Law Nº 1565.

EIB was an educational approach (it is still an approach) where the native language must be maintained and developed, but linked to Spanish in the national context. That educational reform has considered bilingualism to be for indigenous language-speaking peasants, but not for the urban population (see art. 9, Law Nº 1565). In some ways, this stage has allowed linguistic rights to be applied.

3.3. Trilingualist stage

Many Latin American countries, simultaneously sharing with Bolivia, started an EIB approach, such as Peru, Ecuador and others. However, Bolivia with the indigenous President, Evo Morales, started to change again in 2006, manifestly towards the decolonization of this country, from a nation-state to a plurinational state. It was a big change, in deed, as pinpointed by the new Political Constitution of the State.

This political and legal change has considered internal ethnic groups as the indigenous nations constructing the plurinational state. At the same time, 36 indigenous languages were acknowledged as official languages, in addition to Castilian Spanish. Afterwards, the Educational Law Nº 070 took into account the acquisition of an indigenous language, Spanish and one foreign language, as trilingual education (see arts. 7 and 10, Law Nº 070). Likewise, the Linguistic Law of Bolivia (Law Nº 269) corroborates that those 36 indigenous languages and Castilian Spanish (*castellano* or Bolivian Spanish) are official languages.

Therefore, the Bolivian trilingual perspective opens anew the linguistic rights in two ways, say, for inner and outer languages, since collective linguistic rights belong to inner indigenous languages and the individual linguistic rights belong to foreign languages. In addition, Bolivians cannot work in the public sector (including public universities), if monolingual in Spanish or in heritage language (Aymara, Quechua, etc.)³⁹. Hence, bilingualism between a native language and Spanish, and the learning of a foreign language, results in the creation of linguistic capital, applied within a certain linguistic market.

³⁹The Public University of El Alto (UPEA), demands as a linguistic requirement for being university teacher the certificate of a native language and English.

4. LINGUISTIC RIGHTS AND LANGUAGE POLICY

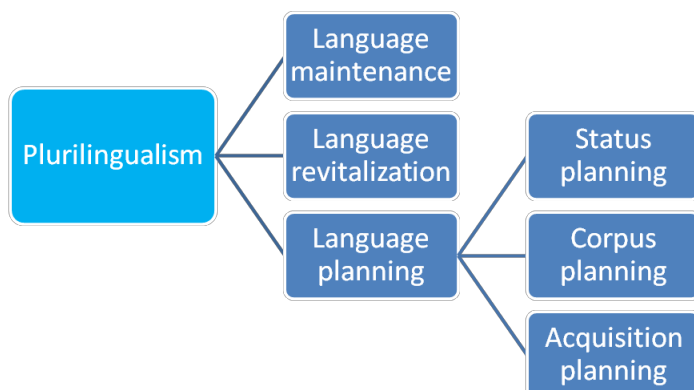
At the international level, linguists attended a world conference in Barcelona (1996) in order to agree on linguistic rights. This event stated the Universal Declaration of the Linguistic Rights, which in its first article defines two sociolinguistic categories for conceding linguistic rights. Those are language community and language group. Article 1, paragraph 1 says:

“This declaration considers as a language community any human society established historically in a particular territorial space, whether this space be recognized or not, which identifies itself as a people and has developed a common language as a natural means of communication and cultural cohesion among its members. The term language specific to a territory refers to the language of the community historically established in such a space” (UNESCO 26-03-2010, online).

And paragraph 5 of the same article completes the definition:

“This Declaration considers as a language group any group of persons sharing the same language which is established in the territorial space of another language community but which does not possess historical antecedents equivalent to those of that community. Examples of such groups are immigrants, refugees, deported persons and members of diasporas” (UNESCO 26-03-2010, online).

Then, a language community and the language groups can receive linguistic rights in a country; nevertheless, this Declaration has to be recognized and operationalized through linguistic laws. With regard to language policy, we know two contrastive sorts: assimilationist policy and pluralist policy. Sociolinguists like Fishman (1971, 1972), Kloss (1969), Cooper (1989) and Swann et al (2004) studied different sorts of language policy. Fishman, for instance, states that language shift is an assimilationist policy and language maintenance is related to pluralism. Otherwise, language maintenance means L1 & L2 learning, and it contrasts language shift. Now, we organize below the policentric policy, which is called plurilingualism and it is classified in three constraints: language maintenance, revitalization and planning. Likewise, language planning is understood as status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning:



This plurilingualism scheme is a new way with great potential for sociolinguistics in several countries, which are also considered (each one) as a sociolinguistic area or they have one or more sociolinguistic areas. We mention some of them: Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, India, Belgium, Spain and so on.

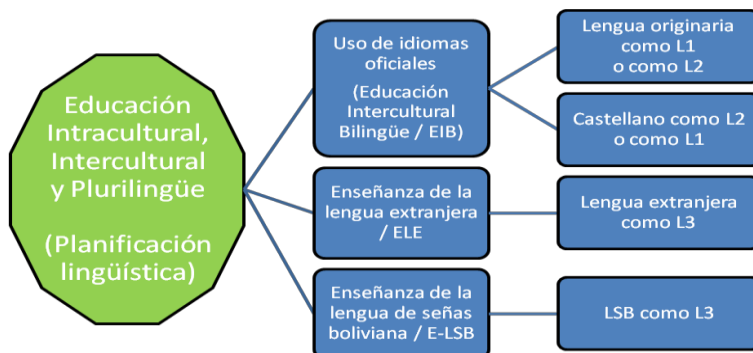
5. LANGUAGE POLICY AND LINGUISTIC POLICIES IN BOLIVIA

According to the Political Constitution of the Plurinational State (CPEP), Bolivia has plurilingualism as its language policy. The first article of the CPEP declares cultural and linguistic pluralism to form the background of the country. The fifth article recognizes Castilian Spanish (*castellano*, in Spanish) and 36 indigenous languages to have official status. This is the plurilingualism of the country. Likewise, the CPEP states that the plurinational government and the regional governments will use two official languages. The regional governments must use their own native language and Spanish.



The 95th article of the CPEP delegates tasks like language revitalization, preservation, development, learning and broadcasting to the universities. The 234th article demands that the public sector is obligated to be bilingual in the workplace. Finally, the tenth transitory provision to the Constitution indicates that public employees or clerks may learn little by little an indigenous language.

On the other hand, the Educational Law "Avelino Siñani – Elizardo Pérez", Law N° 070, declares an Intracultural, Intercultural and Plurilingual Education (Art. 3rd, numeral 8). The 7th article, numeral 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 explains that the indigenous language must be taught and learned as L1 or L2, conversely, Castilian Spanish as L2 or L1. Likewise, it demands the teaching of a foreign language beginning in primary school. Finally, the teaching of Bolivian Sign Language is part of plurilingual education.



In this way, Intracultural, Intercultural and Plurilingual Education (EIIP) specifically aims for a sort of trilingual education, namely, the acquisition of two official languages (L1 & L2) and a foreign language as L3. This is confirmed in article 10, numeral 4 of the Law Nº 070, which indicates that trilingual competence⁴⁰ in an indigenous language, Spanish and a foreign language is an aim. Perhaps this transversal trilingualism is not attainable for all, but it is a goal for university students and for higher education.

On the other hand, the General Law of linguistic rights and linguistic policies, Law Nº 269, aims to recognize, to protect, to promote, to diffuse, to develop and to regulate the individual and collective linguistic rights:

“Reconocer, proteger, promover, difundir, desarrollar y regular los derechos lingüísticos individuales y colectivos de los habitantes del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia” (LGDPL, art. 1).

This linguistic law establishes plurilingualism as the language policy of Bolivia, where there are 36 indigenous languages and Castilian Spanish as the “statal” language, as well as Bolivian sign language. It merely recognizes some foreign languages, namely, English, Portuguese, French, Chinese and others.



⁴⁰Trilingual competence means having ability for communicating in three languages.

This linguistic law also distinguishes the normalization, the normatization and the standardization of the languages. However, the three concepts belong to the language normalization, which is the third linguistic policy of Bolivia, after language revitalization and language maintenance⁴¹. The normalization of a language is applicable to the task of status planning, while both normatization and standardization are pertinent to corpus planning, thus all of them are encompassed in language planning.

For language legislation, this law (Law Nº 269) takes mainly the personality principle and the territorial principle, but the others such as decolonization, (sociolinguistic)-equitableness, (linguistic)-equality and interculturality are more general principles. With respect to these principles, the Political Constitution of the State (2009) and the Educational Law (2010) mention the sovereignty principle, in order to distinguish between the official languages and foreign languages.

Yet, according to UNESCO (cited by Romero et al 2012), Bolivia has several endangered languages. Spanish is the only language which is not endangered. Aymara, Quechua, Guarani, Chipaya, Weenhayek, Guarayu and Chiman are all vulnerable. Machineri, Moxeño and others of the 36 languages are at risk of extinction, and the Puquina language is considered extinct.

We can corroborate that endangering process, because minimally it is necessary three factors of language vitality: the size of the ethnic group, the saturation of speakers and the rate of vernacularity. The minimal size of the group for vitality is estimated 5.900 inhabitants (Crevels 2007, cited by Romero et al 2012). The saturation has to be approximately 70% of minority language speakers (Baker 1985). The rate of vernacularity can be at least 56% of indigenous language as L1 (Laimé 2011). Therefore, the plurilingualism of Bolivia is nowadays a challenge for revitalizing minority languages, perhaps except for Aymara, Quechua and Guarani.

6. FINISHING WORDS

The three social roles of language are not equitable in a country. When one of them is considered important, this one changes the sociolinguistic situation of a country. In that manner, the communication always was and is still considered a more important factor within the society. Thus the hierarchization of languages is the subject-matter, which is named triglossia, or the hierarchization of bilingualisms, called nuanced triglossia. However, when the culture and the ethnic identity are regarded as important, the triglossia falls down. It results in sociolinguistic change, from nuanced triglossia to nuanced plurilingualism, that is to say, the

⁴¹ Language maintenance against language shift or plurilingualism vs monolingualism.

distribution of languages in various nuanced communities (bilingual communities) all round the country.

Nevertheless, if the context of interpersonal praxis is privileged, the pragmatic contextualizing can consolidate language hierarchy or territorial bilingualism, depending on the deictic weight in societal or intercultural relations. We understand the societal as the hierarchical, but the intercultural as the distance relationships. In addition, we discover that the sociolinguistics of trilingualism contributes to metalinguistic studies.

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