

# Education Reform and Language Politics in the Coroico Municipality of the Nor Yungas of Bolivia

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Aymara, one of four national languages in Bolivia, has become endangered within the past generation in the Coroico municipality. Top-down education reforms implemented in 1994 have adopted a language-as-resource orientation to alleviate the degradation of Bolivia's indigenous languages. Bottom-up grassroots movements nationwide reveal a tenuous shift away from colonial-era language attitudes. The gap between the language policy of Bolivia, as enacted by the Education Reform, and the practice of that policy at the grassroots level characterizes the contentious and shifting social atmosphere of Bolivian sociolinguistic culture. My focus centers on historical legislation and language attitudes against multilingualism, as well as legislation and language attitudes promoting multilingualism. This case study exemplifies efforts to curb language abandonment in the face of globalization and the growth of world languages.

## 1. Introduction

The Coroico municipality, approximately 60 miles over the Andes from the capital city of La Paz, Bolivia, encompasses a majority population of Aymara semi-subsistence agriculturalists. One of Bolivia's largest indigenous groups, the Aymara in the Coroico municipality cobble together an existence at once remote and global. The town of Coroico, with 3,500 inhabitants, is an attractive and scenic tourist destination, the favorite of many international tourists and residents of La Paz on weekend holiday. A modern highway, completed in the last few years, takes passengers (more) safely over the Andes from La Paz to Coroico. But the steep, semi-tropical hillsides of the Nor Yungas, the region of which Coroico is a part, keep other towns within the municipality isolated. In essence, the geopolitical makeup of the Coroico municipality reveals its sociocultural complexity: the coming-together of multiple ethnicities, subsistence patterns, socioeconomic standings, and languages.

The two most commonly spoken languages in the Nor Yungas are Aymara and Spanish, the latter being the language of the government and state. Colonialism historically attempted to eradicate indigenous languages to unify the

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country and its indigenous people under one language: Spanish. Government legislation during this era enacted education policies to punish public use of indigenous languages, including Aymara. Currently, with Bolivia's neoliberal reforms—which knit the nation more closely to the global market—and impending increased tourist traffic to the region as a result of the new highway, knowledge and use of Spanish has become increasingly important as the Aymara agriculturalists in Coroico utilize and participate in the democratic reforms of their country. By the same token, government legislation resulting in the Law of Popular Participation, which includes the Education Reform of 1994, enacts a promotive language policy requiring the presence of bilingual education in regional schools where more than one language is spoken by the community. The Education Reform reveals efforts by the government to elevate human rights and prevent the loss of linguistic capital in Bolivia. Aymara, therefore, maintains a tenuous existence as a language. Simultaneously dying out and being revitalized, shunned and used with pride, the contextual contradictions of Aymara use and language attitudes encapsulate changes within the larger social milieu of the country.

This article will discuss the interaction and effects of education reform, globalization, and minority identity politics for sustainable multilingualism in the Coroico municipality of Bolivia. The discussion will take place in two parts: the first part will discuss the preponderance of language shift in the Coroico municipality, which may lead to the death of Aymara in the municipality within two generations. To understand the phenomena of language shift, an understanding of historical social factors motivating negative language attitudes<sup>1</sup> is required. I will then discuss the role of globalization and Bolivia's adoption of neoliberal reforms and how they influence language politics in the country. The second part of the paper will discuss the potential reversal of language shift in the Coroico municipality due to promotive education policies and social movements that valorize indigenous languages and a multilingual nation.

The Education Reform of 1994, as part of Bolivia's transition to a capitalist democracy, is a policy that signifies remarkable transformation for the national economic stability of Bolivia, the vitality of indigenous languages, and indigenous rights. As a pivotal turning point to reverse negative language attitudes and the loss of Aymara, the Reform attempts to promote indigenous languages and cultural diversity, which would alleviate Bolivia's endemic poverty by creating more equitable opportunities for citizens. In order to be successful, the Reform must replace negative language attitudes and social stigmas that view

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term “negative language attitudes” to refer to individuals or communities that feel a language marks them as lesser members of society, thereby wishing to discontinue the use of the language in public spheres.

language as a problem with the attitude that multilingualism is a social advantage, viewing language as a resource. If the community overcomes the negative social stigmas associated with their language, social mobility will not be hindered by the public use of Aymara. Both the efficacy of the Reform and the ways in which people incorporate it into their lives depend heavily on sustained implementation and popular participation. The language attitudes within the community are divided between those that feel Aymara is valuable and integral to Bolivian culture, and those that feel Aymara is useless to citizens negotiating their role in modern society. The Reform will not be effective if the polarity of language attitudes in the municipality is not reconciled.

I analyze how language use, practice, policy, and social stigmas expose the gap between the Bolivian government and the *Yungueños* in their desires for language survival, modernity, and effective democracy. The Coroico municipality exists in a precarious sociohistorical moment. The community faces the extinction of Aymara due to language shift and negative attitudes associated with Aymara use. But as the effects of the Education Reform catches on, and as Aymara and other indigenous languages are used in public more frequently, negative attitudes may recede and pave the way for multilingualism to become a sustainable reality. This paper offers a sociohistorical analysis of the terrain of language attitudes in the Coroico municipality and the ideologies that influence those attitudes.

I spent three months in Bolivia researching the Education Reform and language politics in the Coroico municipality. Participant observation as well as structured and semi-structured interviews informed my findings. Some interviews were scheduled ahead of time and tape-recorded. I also conducted semi-structured interviews, but recorded them only with field notes due to formalities with my interviewee. I conducted informal interviews when I would participate in an event and take the opportunity to chat with people in that setting. Unless I had permission to tape record ahead of time, I relied on copious field notes. I selected interviewees in a snowball-like fashion: one person telling me about another person, telling me about another person, and so on. I know that I was unable to interview several very important figures whose opinions and experiences would have greatly contributed to this article. I am also sure I inadvertently left out several others whose expertise or experiences I never knew or heard about. Before and after the completion of my fieldwork, I spent three months doing background research with secondary sources to deepen my understanding of the situation I was entering into and my findings once I completed fieldwork.

## **2. Language Shift in Coroico**

At the one-room school in the town of Chacopata in the Coroico municipality, the students were asked which of them could speak Aymara.

Nobody answered; silence gave way to hushed giggles concealing embarrassment and shyness. The children all pointed to one student, reporting in Spanish that he spoke Aymara. The student put his head down, shaking it, and denied the claims.

In the Coroico municipality the majority of parents speak Aymara as their first language, especially in the rural areas. These parents actively choose not to teach their children Aymara and discourage them from admitting their Aymara heritage. Parents speak the language only between each other, behind closed doors, refrain from speaking Aymara in public, and inform local teachers that they want their children instructed only in Spanish, despite knowing their neighbors speak both languages.

The Coroico municipality is undergoing a first-generation language shift. In the past sixteen to twenty years, parents stopped teaching their children Aymara as the first language, replacing it with Spanish. The non-transmission of the mother tongue to children bodes poorly for the survival of Aymara in subsequent generations. The fact that this generation of children was raised without Aymara indicates that they will most likely not raise their own children with Aymara, and within two generations the language will have completely disappeared from the Nor Yungas.

Aymara parents have become embarrassed about teaching their children Aymara in a region of predominantly Aymara communities for different reasons. Parents, school officials, teachers, and students expressed that first-generation language shift is occurring in Coroico because Aymara is only useful for speaking to one's grandparents or parents, nowhere else in life. One student, a young man attending the rural University in the Coroico municipality described to me how he was raised:

En la casa, aprendemos el Aymara de los papas. Más que todo, por ejemplo, mis papas hablan el Aymara entre si. Pero cuando me hablan a mi, me hablan en Castellano. Y hablo en Castellano para responderles. Pero, hay mi abuela, por ejemplo, mi abuela sólo habla Aymara. Ella no puede hablar en Castellano. Entonces, ella me habla en Aymara, y entonces yo también la contesto en Aymara. Así no comunicamos. Es que, la lengua Aymara nos facilita comunicarnos. O sea, sólo se entiende entre nosotros. Y ¿qué tal si voy a otro país? El Aymara no va a servir para nada. En eso piensan los padres también. No hay muchas personas que hablan en Aymara. Yo creo que, la lengua Aymara es una lengua que nos facilita comunicar, más que todo, con las personas mayores.

(Jorge, personal interview, March 2004)

We learn Aymara from our parents. Not in school. More than anything, my parents speak Aymara between each other. But when they speak to me, they speak in Spanish. And I speak in Spanish when I respond to them. But my grandmother, for example, she does not understand Spanish. So, when she speaks to me in Aymara, I answer her in Aymara. That is how we communicate. Aymara helps us communicate between each other. That is, it's how we understand each other. But what if I want to go to another country? Aymara will not be useful at all. Not many people speak Aymara. I believe that

the Aymara language is a language that facilitates communication, more than anything, with older people.

(author's translation)

Jorge describes how his parents would speak Aymara only with each other yet actively chose to speak Spanish (*Castellano*) with him. He feels that speaking Aymara is useful only for speaking to older people, and will not be useful in the future or for anything outside of communicating with elderly family members. As many analysts of language vitality have illustrated, if young speakers feel that a language is useful only for speaking with grandparents and have no desire to speak it amongst themselves, let alone to their own children, language death is imminent.

In another interview, a school administrator, Raul, described to me the class system in Bolivia. He told me that there are three classes, the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. The indigenous people—Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní—are all lower class. In order to ascend in society, the Indians have to get rid of the social markers that mark them as lower class, backward, uneducated. So they deny their language. They teach their children Spanish so that they can go to school and be successful; so they will not be labeled as Indians based on the language that they speak. According to Raul, social class is not conflated with ethnicity at any level other than lower class. Bolivians want to assimilate to the upper classes systems, and in order to learn about computers and politics and medicine, they have to know Spanish. Aymara is no longer useful to the people because none of the businesses use Aymara, and the people do not want the social stigmas attached to the language hindering them.

These narratives reveal more than just the attitude that Aymara is not useful for anything. Obviously, a language will be transmitted from generation to generation only if it is useful to people in everyday life and in multiple arenas of life, not just for speaking with one's grandparents. A language, above everything else, exists to facilitate communication between people. When that function no longer exists, the language need not exist. But nothing about the language, as a formal system of communication, makes it better or worse than other languages for allowing people to communicate. Thus, it is the social values attached to the language that create the perception among speakers that the language is not useful. People in Coroico often said that Aymara is not used in public because of embarrassment or shame. Using it marks them as backward, degenerate, uneducated: of a lower class.

The embarrassment and shame attached to the use of Aymara in the public sphere was described to me in detail by one man I interviewed, Carlos, a teacher involved with literacy programs among adults in the Coroico municipality:

Cuando van, por ejemplo, a La Paz, y quieren visitar a un ministro, si hablas Aymara, te sacan empujones. Pero si hablas en Castellano, te dicen 'pasa, toma asiento'. Sí. Pero si hablas Aymara, te dicen, 'aaah, ¡afuera afuera afuera!'. Entonces, yo creo que, esta experiencia amarga hace que la gente se asume de

esta manera. Dicen que no vas a sacar más allá, aprendiendo el Aymara. Tienes que hablar en Castellano, y sólo así vas a salir bien. Y si sólo hablas Aymara, hay discriminación, hay marginalización, que viene desde la clase dominante. Y, vas a una oficina en el sector público, y hablas en Aymara, te van a buscar un traductor. ‘¿Quién sabe hablar el Aymara?’ Pero la persona que grita esta pregunta sabe hablar Aymara, entiende Aymara. Pero, ¿sabiendo que entiende, no? Pero, tiene vergüenza de, tiene vergüenza de sea identificado como Aymara, como campesino. Y, bueno, es puestamente producto de educación. De sistema educativo. El sistema educativo hace que tengamos vergüenza de nuestra cultura, de nuestras costumbres, nuestras tradiciones. Los campesinos han estado siempre marginados, ¿no? Campesino es cualquiera que vive en el campo, ¿no? Que no quede de encima, entonces, yo creo que esto se viene desde la época de colonialismo. La marginación. Y ahora digamos la ignación, digamos, en que de tener vergüenza, para mí es producto de este sociedad en que vivimos. Más de, el sistema educativo. Porque creemos que la educación reintero, no, es un sistema muy poderoso.

(Carlos, personal interview, March 2004)

When they go, for example, to La Paz, and want to visit a ministry or an office, if you speak Aymara, they shove you. But if you speak in Spanish, they tell you, ‘come in, take a seat!’ Yes. But if you speak Aymara, they say to you ‘aaahh, out out out!’ So, I believe that this experience, it creates bitterness. They say, then, that you aren’t going to get anything out of learning Aymara. You have to speak Spanish, and only then things go well for you. And if you only speak Aymara, there is discrimination, marginalization, that comes from the dominant class. If you go to an office in the public sector, and you speak Aymara, they tell you to find a translator. ‘Who knows how to speak Aymara’ they yell, but the person who just yelled the question knows Aymara, can speak Aymara. They know and understand, no? But they are embarrassed, embarrassed to be identified as Aymara, as a peasant. It’s a product of the previous education system, the education system created in us an embarrassment of our culture, of our customs, our traditions...The peasants have always been marginalized, no? A peasant is someone who lives in the countryside, no? That’s what the word means, but now it has come to encompass all indigenous people, whether they live in the countryside or not. It means they can’t rise to the top. I believe this came from the colonial epoch. The marginalization. And I believe that the embarrassment stems from this, and is a product of the society in which we live. More, the education system, because we believe that education reiterates those values. It is a powerful system.

(author’s translation)

Carlos describes the humiliation and rejection that people experience when they speak Aymara in public, and the extent to which people will hide knowing the language. He then attributes the persistence of the embarrassment and marginalization to the education system of the colonial era, saying it had a powerful role in shaping social consciousness.

The phenomena of language shift in the Coroico Municipality is the product of socio-political conditions in Bolivia that have, through centuries of colonization, created hierarchies of identity, prestige, social class, and mobility.

## 2.1 The Legacy of Colonialism

The potential for language death in Coroico exists in part due to the legacy of linguistic nationalism. Historically, the Bolivian government attempted to eradicate indigenous languages in favor of Spanish to cohere the nation as a monolingual whole. Schooling was thus conducted only in Spanish, and use of any other language in public shamed the individual and marked them as uneducated and low-class.

In Bolivia, the language policy of Spanish-only in the colonial era produced and reproduced the social stigmas attached to the use of indigenous languages in the public sphere (Luykx, 1999; Albó, 1999). Speakers of indigenous languages remained low in the social hierarchy and could only legitimately access the public sphere through the use of Spanish. The policy, and the ideology behind it, was applied to the school system for the purpose of shaping citizens to ascend to the dominant minority.

Schools operated as ‘civilizing’ institutions (Luykx, 1999), with the intent of erasing cultural and linguistic difference among the indigenous populations. Schools instructed students in Spanish only, regardless of students’ mother tongue, and focused on rote learning and memorization. Students were punished publicly for speaking in their mother tongue at any time during school hours. Xavier Albó, a Bolivian linguist, writer, and anthropologist, has written several books discussing Bolivia’s education reforms, language policies, and ethnic movements throughout the past thirty years. An anonymous source quoted in an Albó (2003) text describes his experiences in school:

Yo tenía un profesor llamado C., que vive hasta ahora. Cuando yo hablaba en mi idioma *aimara* me mandaba a la cancha y en las dos manos nos ponía piedras y nos hacía alzar un pie. Un centinela vigilaba y me golpeaba con el palo cuando bajaba el pie, todo por hablar mi idioma. Así yo viví.

(narrative in Albó, 2003:31)

I once had a teacher named C., who is still alive today. When I would speak in my language, Aymara, he sent me to the schoolyard and in my two hands he put rocks and told me to raise one foot. Another student would stand watch and would hit me with a stick if I let that foot fall, just for speaking my language. This is how I grew up

(author’s translation)

As Albó (2003) illustrates, anyone who spoke an indigenous language, i.e. Aymara, Quechua, or Guaraní, were punished in school because those who spoke indigenous languages were considered backward, uneducated, ignorant, and lower class. Those who spoke Spanish, and spoke it without an indigenous accent, could not be labeled as such and were accepted into society. Only through the use

of Spanish was it possible to excel in school and in vocation, and move into the upper echelons of society. School curricula were then designed by officials who maintained that lower class citizens, in order to ascend to true Bolivian status, needed to speak Spanish and forget their 'backward' ways of life:

In 1954 the International Labor Organization of the United Nations began in Bolivia its first action program on behalf of native peoples anywhere in the world...deputy director of the ILO, Jeff Rens [said] the objective of the program was Indian integration "by making a single people of two populations separated by origin, language, and way of life...in their eyes an educated Indian is no longer an Indian, he has become a man.

(Healy, 2001 quoting Rens, 1961)

Students, socialized into thinking their language and culture separated them from dominant society and from being considered 'fully human,' associated negative values with indigenous language use and felt that they were nothing if they could not speak Spanish. The symbolic domination of covertly requiring speakers to access a certain mode of speaking in order to be socially acceptable is both produced and reproduced sub-consciously: produced by the dominant ideology interlaced within the education system and reproduced by those who feel they need to change their mode of speaking in order to access a certain domain of life (Bourdieu, 1991). If indigenous Aymara speakers did not learn Spanish, they had no way to communicate with anyone in the 'legitimate' domains of society, much less actually enter those domains.

## **2.2 Language and Nationalism**

Punishments in school, such as the one Álbo (2003) quotes in the above passage, functioned to create a negative association in children's minds about using their mother tongue in public. These methods were meant to unify the Bolivian populace and cohere them as a nation in the aggressive promotion of Spanish in the classroom. Linguistic similarity acts as a cultural marker that puts tangible boundaries around an otherwise imaginary community, constructing and legitimizing the nation and providing a basis for nationalism (Anderson, 1983).

Language has always been seen as fundamental to building and establishing nations, especially since the end of the eighteenth century. By default of this process, linguistic minorities result from the nationalism that bars them from full participation in the state (Heller, 1999). Language as a defining factor of community boundaries implies that one can be associated with or dissociated from the community by virtue of language use. The association is not projected by any inherent properties of the languages in conflict, but by communities using them for social ends. The process of using language as a tool for nation-building results in subjugation and discrimination of minority groups whose language differs from the national language.



The deterministic ideology within Bolivia's previous education system—a covert policy suggesting that the ideal citizen, as a Bolivian, speaks only Spanish—created a polarity of identity based on language use. As Bourdieu (1991) suggests, language use is founded on social laws of construction, and the construction of an “official language” establishes a hierarchy of linguistic practices. Any mode of speaking that deviated from the ‘standard’ or ‘official’ language was socially measured at a degree lower in value than that standard. A unified linguistic ‘market’ is essential to the formation and legitimacy of the state, and the education system functions to shape citizens as competent in the legitimate mode of expression. Linguistic competence then becomes the rubric against which educational progress can be measured. Thus, language use ultimately reflects social distinction rather than linguistic distinction.

The negative language attitudes created in the colonial era remain embedded in the social fabric of Bolivia today, as witnessed by the reasons community members, especially parents, offer for not transmitting the mother tongue to children. However, education methods and social stigmas from the colonial era do not explain why language shift has only just begun in Coroico. Current changes in the Bolivian government, society, and the increased tourist traffic to Coroico motivate the language shift prevalent in the past generation.

### **3. Globalization and Bolivia's Democratic Reforms**

Bolivia passed the Law of Popular Participation and other neoliberal reforms in the 1990's in an attempt to integrate with the global market economy. The internationalization of economic, industrial, and technological resources in Bolivia has ushered in the era of globalization. For Bolivia's languages, globalization is a double-edged sword. On one side, it exacerbates the process and rate of language death as indigenous languages are subjugated not just on the national level, but also on the international level (Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003). World languages, like English, have broadened their international sphere, expanding the locus of their function and use. More and more English-speaking and Spanish-speaking tourists and businesses enter into the lives of Bolivians in rural areas, like Coroico. Computers and the internet also make the global more intimate with the local. Thus, globalization and Bolivia's neoliberal reforms provide a more urgent economic impetus for parents to teach their children Spanish as their first language and abandon Aymara.

However, current globalization theorists who focus on the effects of globalization emphasize that other globalizing trends reveal opportunities for diversity and expression (Giddens, 1990; Appadurai, 1996; Hornberger, 1998; Heller, 1999; Brysk, 2000). In Bolivia, neoliberal reforms and the transition to a global market economy were designed, in part, to alleviate the endemic poverty of the nation. Reforming the education system and human rights policies for the minority populace have proffered the space for indigenous social movements and linguistic revitalization. Indigenous language groups cultivate self-determinism

in part because globalization “creates new institutional links across borders, such as international organizations, integrated markets, and transnational social movement networks...globalization privileges the role of information and communication...all of these changes grant new access to power, as they voice identities and messages across borders” (Brysk, 2000: 11). The possibility for people to network with others across borders and nations without geographical constraints redefines the territory in which power relations operate.

Although globalization currently motivates the first-generation language shift in Coroico, it also, through neoliberal reforms, has the power to prevent the loss of Aymara. Linguistic revitalization movements and the 1994 Education Reform work to subvert the social stigma and negative attitudes of indigenous languages in Bolivia, offering a potential reversal of language shift in the Coroico municipality.

#### **4. Changes in Bolivian Language Ideology**

During the celebration of Bolivia’s Día del Mar, the Day of the Sea, school children in Coroico stood in formation with flags, posters, and props to rally for the national goal of reclaiming Bolivia’s lost sea coast. Throughout my time in Coroico, I had only heard Aymara used in public by adults, and usually during political meetings in the countryside. However, on the Day of the Sea I was taken by surprise when the multi-colored flag representing the indigenous nation of Bolivia came to the fore and children, looking immaculate in their school uniforms, presented speeches and songs in Aymara. It surprised me because I had learned, by that time, that public use of Aymara, especially among children, was shunned. Surely the Aymara message was lost on the monolingual Spanish-speaking students and townsfolk, which made the display of Aymara during this public celebration notable and symbolic.

The use of Aymara in the Day of the Sea celebration illustrates the complexity and shifting atmosphere of language politics in Coroico. Indigenous social movements in Bolivia have laid claim to language as a vital cultural marker of the indigenous group, and the social demands made by these movements often entail abolishing the negative social stigmas attached to language use. Following ethnic revitalization movements in the 1950’s, 1970’s, and the emergence of democracy in the 1980’s, new language policies began to emerge that respected the multilingual reality of Bolivia. The government began incorporating multilingualism and respect for indigenous languages into its nationalist ideology.

##### **4.1 Language Policy and the Education Reform of 1994**

In 1994, Gonzalez Sanchez de Lozada, in his first term as president, implemented the Plan de Todos, including the Law of Popular Participation and the Education Reform, which proposed a restructuring of school systems,

materials, and teacher training to incorporate bilingual and intercultural education. The Law of Popular Participation redistributed the political and administrative boundaries in the country and increased budget allocation to municipal governments to 20%. As 85% of the municipalities are comprised of indigenous majorities, the redistribution of boundaries and funds potentially empowers the rural indigenous peasantry to choose how their resources are allocated and how to accomplish governance on their own terms (Healy, 2001). Previously, municipalities were governed by centrally-appointed officials who traveled from the capital and instituted the rule of law. The LPP made decentralization more democratic and community based, instituting participatory planning and incorporating indigenous cultural practices and vigilance councils (Healy, 2001), allowing citizens in each municipality the opportunity to participate in determining the form and quality of their government.

In 1999 the Bolivian government granted official national language status to Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani alongside Spanish. The designation of the three most widely spoken indigenous languages as national languages can be seen as both a response to the growing demand for indigenous legitimacy and cultural pluralism, and an initiation to reverse the trend of language loss.

The 1994 Education Reform with its bilingual education component “aims to halt the decline in indigenous language fluency in the younger generations and raise Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani to the status of truly ‘official’ languages” (Luykx, 1999: 13). Language policies act as political tools for shaping and maintaining the polity they represent, which emerge from the linguistic culture in which they function. By qualifying Aymara, Quechua and Guarani as national languages, macro-level governmental decree creates an overt multilingual reality. Because language is often a cultural marker by which nationalisms are justified, language policy either reflects the sociocultural reality it is grounded in or attempts to create it.

Analysts of world language policies examine the ‘fit’ between the policy and the polity it operates within (Schiffman, 1996). For any language policy to be qualitatively understood, it cannot be divorced from the group of people it governs. Language policies do not emerge *a priori*, but are constructed to produce and reproduce the various ‘rules’ by which speakers engage to access legitimate domains of speech. *Types* of speech, knowing when and how and where to speak in certain ways and to certain people are covertly understood by members of a given polity, and the social values attached to various speech codes often arise from the language policy that officiates the public sphere.

Speakers acknowledge the overt statements of the language policy and its underlying values to negotiate the formation of identities as citizens within that polity. For example, the covert monolingual policy of the United States, establishing English as the dominant language but never explicitly saying so in a legal document, creates a hierarchical formula. As the language that all citizens must access in order to function in places such as business or school, English occupies the top rung of the hierarchy and other languages fall below, such that

speakers of languages other than English, although they do not have to give up their language, must also learn English in order to weave into the social fabric of the United States. Native English speakers, by fiat, have no obligation to learn any of the other languages that are spoken in the United States due to the implicitly understood and reinforced 'law' that English is the accepted standard by which citizens communicate. A language policy, in varying degrees, either ignores the multilingualism of the nation in order to create a monolingual state, or reflects the multiplicity of codes within the state, conceding diversity as the marker of the national polity. The way a policy fits with its polity reveals much about how language is used to shape a sociocultural reality, and the nature of the linguistic culture in which it is grounded. Therefore, the language policy of Bolivia reveals a great deal about the shifting social attitudes about indigenous language use in the public sphere.

The current promotive bilingual policy of Bolivia draws upon a language-as-resource orientation which regards multilingualism as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. The vision behind a language-as-resource orientation is one of pluralist pragmatism, in which language becomes capital to its users rather than an emblematic tool of exclusion and nation-building (Anderson, 1983). The more linguistic codes one can access, the more power one has. In Bolivia, and in Coroico especially, this can be exemplified by Aymara politicians using both their indigenous language to communicate and identify with other Aymara speakers, while also allowing them to communicate and identify with wider national politics through their use of Spanish.

The ability to speak more than one language in a multilingual society puts users at an advantage by allowing them to access multiple social groups and to identify with more people. In this sense, language is capital and identities are negotiated via the application of that capital in differing social contexts. Language is not inherently exclusionary, but it has been used to those ends, especially for the purposes of nation-building. Shifting the discourse to a language-as-resource orientation, the exploitation of linguistic capital builds relations between groups, and the once-marginalized group escapes inevitable social subordination as the stigmas attached to indigenous language use deteriorate.

The Education Reform of 1994 attempts, among other things, to reverse the internal colonialism achieved in previous education methods. The current social and economic conditions contribute to a context in which educational discourse shifts to one of pluralism, of unity succumbing to diversity, so that multilingualism is no longer an obstacle to national unity, but its descriptor.

#### **4.2 Reversing Language Shift in Coroico**

Due in part to the social changes in Bolivia in the past thirty-five years, the public use of indigenous languages has amplified in the past decade. Aymara can be heard on University campuses, in classrooms, and during political

demonstrations and national holidays, like the Day of the Sea. Language attitudes are changing nationwide, but the efficacy of the Education Reform in the Coroico municipality is yet to be determined. The Reform must contend with existing negative language attitudes and the current first-generation language shift. Reversing language shift and altering language attitudes are vital to creating sustainable multilingualism and curbing language death in the region, but without reception from the community, the Education Reform is a meaningless governmental decree.

#### 4.2.1 The Unidad Académica Campesina

The initial step toward creating bilingual education requires the availability of trained teachers in the bilingual modality, as well as texts and materials for bilingual instruction. At the Unidad Académica Campesina (UAC), a local University affiliated with the Bolivian Catholic University in La Paz, both three and five year programs are offered to train teachers in the bilingual education modality of the current Reform. Applied three years ago, the *Pedagogía* program in the UAC is the first program in the Yungas to offer this training, and students from all over Bolivia attend the University so that they can become bilingual teachers. The *Pedagogía* program requires students to learn both the methodology of teaching bilingually and also to create bilingual texts.

Despite the process of language shift in the Coroico municipality, each of the students in the *Pedagogía* program felt that through the implementation of the Reform in the local schools, the erosion of indigenous languages would abate:

Los profesores nos enseñan en dos lenguas, que son el Aymara y el Castellano. Y este es el bilingüismo, que para nosotros es muy importante porque nosotros vayamos allá a los cultos, y plantamos a los niños a enseñarlos en las dos lenguas. Y yo creo que es bueno llevar esto para nuestro futuro, aquí, para no perder nuestra cultura, y ir adelante, y mejorar la educación

(Jorge, personal interview, March 2004)

The professors teach us in two languages, Aymara and Spanish. And this is bilingualism, which for us is very important because we will become more educated and we plant this in the children that we will teach in both languages. And I believe that it is good to have this for our future, here, so that we don't lose our culture, and so we can go forward, and improve the education, and maintain the languages.

(author's translation)

Jorge extends the philosophy of bilingualism from the training teachers undergo to how they will conduct their classrooms. He thinks of the future, of the role bilingualism will play for the students and their education. More than just a tool for better comprehension, Jorge describes how bilingualism will revitalize the culture, maintain the languages, and bring forward the indigenous populations.

Another student, Felipe, also described the benefits of bilingualism in terms of resolving the social stigmas behind the use of indigenous languages.

Si va a estar en todas las partes, ya aplicando, ya como, aquí como lo están enseñando sí podría resolver la discriminación y vergüenza. Porque van a saber de sí, digamos, a valorarse ellos mismos que son de origen Aymara y también saben hablar Castellano. Si no lo vamos a enseñarles, creo que las lenguas originarias van a morir. En cambio, enseñándolos a los niños ellos van a mantenerlo, la lengua.

(Felipe, personal interview, March 2004)

If [the Reform could be implemented] in all parts of Bolivia, all parts of it applied, like how it is being taught to us here, it could resolve the discrimination and shame behind use of the indigenous languages. Because they are going to know how to valorize themselves, where they come from and they will also know how to speak Spanish. If we don't teach the children in their native tongue the indigenous languages will die out. If they don't use their language, it will be lost. In change, teaching the language to the children will maintain it.

(author's translation)

Each of these students comes from different regions of Bolivia with different linguistic backgrounds, one a native Quechua speaker and one a native Aymara speaker. They have plans to return to their hometowns and teach at the local schools. The five-year program requires that students write a thesis on original fieldwork, after spending time in the local communities and actively working with them.

The students I interviewed acknowledged that, although the bilingual parts of the Reform are not currently implemented in the Coroico municipality, change comes step by step. When I asked Jorge about the lack of support and resources for the local schools to have bilingual education, and how many teachers in town felt that it would not happen, he replied, "Yes. But as it would be, we are in the process."

The teachers I spoke with also emphasized that bilingual and intercultural education will soon come to the Yungas, but first the teachers must be trained and materials produced before any change can be seen. One teacher, Professor Luchaqui, stressed that the current teaching program had only arrived at the UAC three years ago. This year they will graduate the first teachers licensed to teach bilingual and intercultural education, and subsequent years will see more and more teachers bringing the program to the local schools. He explained that, as part of decentralization and the Law of Popular Participation, each district in the municipality has a director who oversees the programs and the methods of teaching in each school. The director analyzes the linguistic makeup and needs of the communities, and works with the teachers and the parents to formulate a curriculum that will fit the needs of the children.

The teaching program at the UAC forecasts the lasting success of the Reform, language maintenance and revival, and sustainable bilingualism, as long as the philosophy of intercultural education suffuses the communities in which

bilingual education would apply. Despite the discouraging state of language transmission in the Yungas, the students at the UAC are equipped to create the change at the grassroots level that the Reform assures from the macro level.

#### 4.2.2 Aymara in the Public Sphere

When the students at the UAC discussed the underlying shame and embarrassment about using Aymara in public, they each asserted that they, individually, had no fear or embarrassment when using the language. They were proud of their culture and their people, and when a situation would arise where they had the opportunity to speak Aymara, they would not hesitate. Shame and embarrassment of Aymara use in public was explained as a subliminal attribute; a historical attitude indexed by the language; a collective identity assumed by all indigenous people as part of a cultural and historical legacy. But I did not witness such a suppressed use of Aymara in the Coroico Municipality. As a whole, people may acknowledge that their identity is pinned down by this debilitating assumption. But reducing it to that singular monologic expression does not convey the shifting, interactional linguistic practices of the Aymara people in general, nor the resulting identity work produced by those linguistic practices. Identity, as a variegated construction that sustains the ability to shift within context and throughout time, reveals that the “indexical associations imposed from the top down by cultural authorities [may create] ideological expectations among speakers and consequently affect linguistic practice” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004:10). However, those same indexical associations do not assume the totality of any collective identity.

People *told* me repeatedly that, on the whole, Aymara people were ashamed to use the language. But I *witnessed* something very different. The local radio station broadcasts Aymara programming every morning. The ATM machine in town instructs its users in both Spanish and Aymara. The national newspaper publishes a weekly pull-out section in Aymara. Political meetings often contain snippets of Aymara. And public demonstrations contain Aymara songs and stories.

Popular media in Aymara, such as the radio program and the newspaper, would not have been created if ethnic revitalization movements had not opened a space for that type of media to exist. Circuitously, the presence of radio programming and print media widen the space for ethnic revitalization, knitting together the Aymara community within a nation where they may otherwise be geographically isolated.

Radio and newspaper offers citizens who normally would not hear from each other the opportunity to communicate. Radio is a particularly valuable source of communication, because many older generation Aymara citizens cannot read or write, and often a portable radio accompanies farmers out into the fields. I asked the director and commentator of the program, Manuel, what type of audience the program is directed toward. The program airs at six in the morning

and targets an older audience, a majority demographic that speaks Aymara and would be interested in hearing Aymara programming. Manuel confessed that Aymara is strong here among the older generations, they have no shame using the language. But the younger citizens, teenagers and kids, would have no interest listening to Aymara radio. He said that people from the *campo*, or countryside, often request more Aymara programming. The presence of the radio program (including advertisements throughout the day in Aymara), and the people's desire for more programming suggests that, despite teaching their children Spanish as the first language and hiding Aymara from them, they are not interested in losing their language. It remains an important part of their lives and livelihood, of their culture.

In local politics, delegates negotiate the situations when they use Spanish and the situations when they use Aymara with calculated specificity. I interviewed one young politician, Lucio, who had just recently been named the General Secretary of the Central Agraria. A prominent position for a twenty-five year old, Lucio used Aymara in his public speeches more often than anyone else I met. Lucio explained that he uses Aymara so that he can communicate with everyone; with people who did not speak Spanish. But his explanation did not capture the range of his Aymara use. In public meetings, when the entire meeting would be conducted in Spanish, Lucio would give a speech and then end with an Aymara expression, usually raising a supportive, rallying cry from the crowd. Lucio uses Aymara as a political tool to position himself as a leader; to identify with his community through language; to index a social identity. His choice to speak Aymara in an environment where everyone can speak or understand Spanish signifies that use of the language functions for some social end other than mere communication. In this regard, he linguistically shapes an identity through interaction with his audience, and that identity has nothing to do with embarrassment or shame. In the context of political meetings, use of the language does not mark Lucio as backward, ignorant, uneducated, or a second-class citizen. Instead, Lucio's use of the language formulates his subjective position as an Aymara leader.

Likewise, when students volunteer to perform songs or speeches in Aymara for national holiday celebrations, like at the Day of the Sea celebration, their public use of Aymara does not mark them as lower class or less valuable members of society. Instead, the incorporation of the language functions to symbolically incorporate the diversity of Bolivians in the singular Bolivian goal of regaining sea coast. It suggests the unification of indigenous Bolivians and Spanish-descendant Bolivians toward a common national endeavor. Nationalism thus expresses itself through linguistic difference.

Each of these examples underscores the use of Aymara as a resource by its speakers. They capitalize on the available identities that use of the language might suggest, dialogically creating subject positions within the broader social discourse. Not limited to a negative collective identity, use of the language



functions in different domains and contexts to achieve a social goal for the speaker.

## 5. Conclusion

The broadening domains of Aymara public use serves to degrade the negative social stigmas attached to the language, especially when used against the dominant language, Spanish. The fact that the two languages appear side by side in many public environments and popular media demonstrates their ability to complement each other, rather than compete. Choosing between one or the other to negotiate an identity in the public sphere no longer carries a singular, negative connotation. Citizens make language choices in a variety of different public contexts, using the language to achieve a particular social end—and not one that subjugates them further. The shifting social acceptability of Aymara in the public sphere denaturalizes the bourgeois norms of political subordination, transforming relations of power among the linguistic minorities in Bolivia. Cultural revindication and ethnic movements construct new forms of social organization and value, harvesting legitimacy for linguistic minorities in the national context. Politics of identity founded from pluralism penetrate the broad social categories that defined indigenous identity in the colonial era.

The emergence of democracy and the adoption of neoliberal reforms scaffold the transformation of identity politics. The Law of Popular Participation and active decentralization allow for each community to create the terms of governance in their local lives, and a more powerful voice on the national level. Popular participation and decentralization also respect indigenous culture and methods of governance, sanctioning the value of their practice. Rather than imposing government from the top-down, the democratic changes within Bolivia proffer a network of representation from the grassroots level that maintains dialogue and respect among the diversity of peoples in the nation. Without the neoliberal reforms, Law of Popular Participation and decentralization, and the presence of international lending firms that offer indigenous Bolivians voice outside the bounds of the nation-state, the Education Reform and its philosophy of bilingual and intercultural education could not achieve success.

The Education Reform promises to increase the overall quality of education for Bolivians, accomplishing that promise through intercultural and bilingual education for the diversity of the Bolivian populace. The new pedagogy abandons the philosophy of ‘civilizing’ its indigenous citizens and instead promotes the value of the multivalent cultures and lifeways. By implementing a more constructive methodology in the classroom, teachers can help students actualize their potential to receive the best possible education, which yields in turn a highly educated populace, creating more jobs and fortifying the economic base of the nation.

Bilingual and intercultural education has yet to arrive in the Coroico municipality. Although other aspects of the Reform are well underway, bilingual and intercultural education require the most material production and training programs. Teacher training at the UAC currently undertakes the feats of producing bilingual materials and bilingual instruction for teachers. As years progress, more and more bilingually trained teachers will be available for local schools, so the bilingual and intercultural modalities can create lasting changes in rural schools.

Despite first-generation language shift, people in Coroico say that Aymara should not die out, that it should be preserved. This contradiction appears to be motivated by the fact that parents feel Aymara will not serve their children in any domain of life other than the home and for speaking to grandparents. As Aymara becomes used and valued more and more in daily life—as radio programming, public demonstrations, and print media have exemplified—then perhaps the next generation will teach Aymara to their children, and bilingualism in the Coroico municipality will become a sustainable reality.

Speculations aside, the current gap between policy from the macro level and practice at the grassroots level is wide. Macro level policy changes mean nothing unless they are successfully carried out at the grassroots level, which requires incentive and involvement from the people in the communities. If the communities truly do not wish to lose their native language, they command the power to change the trajectory of language loss. Language use in the public sphere has been used as a resource; bilingualism an effective tool for creating and negotiating identities within the wider social milieu. Identity politics in Coroico and Bolivia are changing, redefining historical social strata and linguistic diglossia. Power wielded from below (not granted from above) illustrates the means by which indigenous communities can alter subjective positions within the nation.

A more in-depth study on the efficacy of the Education Reform in Coroico would be a valuable addition to the topics explored in this article. The region is in a dynamic state of transition, and future studies of whether (and how) bilingual and intercultural education improves the quality of life for its speakers in the Coroico municipality would further illuminate the advantages of a language-as-resource orientation, the viability of linguistic diversity in the globalized world, and the social value of cultural pluralism.

The language politics and linguistic situation in Coroico sustains as many complexities and contradictions as there are people who live there. The purpose of this article was not to wrap each one up in a neat little package for simplicity of understanding. Rather, I hope to have highlighted the realm of potential and possibility that lies below the contradictions and complexities—a realm that illustrates the litigious and dynamic process of democracy and social change within the context of globalization.

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