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## LANGUAGE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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### **Abstract**

Federally-funded bilingual programs for American Indian/Alaska Native students are addressed from a language planning perspective. The discussion identifies three language policy types—endoglossic (community-oriented), exoglossic (externally-oriented), and mixed policies—and their relationship to American Indian/Alaska Native bilingual education. Federally-funded bilingual education represents an exoglossic policy for indigenous communities and as such, can lead to language loss. The recommendation here is that indigenous communities begin now to develop endoglossic policies that will reinforce past efforts in bilingual education while simultaneously stabilizing community heritage languages.

### **Introduction**

There has been considerable recent interest in language planning and policy development directed at the various indigenous communities in the United States and Canada (Leap, 1988; Zepeda and Hill, 1990; Zepeda, 1990). That interest has focused alternatively on developments within the communities themselves and those outside, especially at the federal level. Leap (1988) lists a number of indicators of language interest from within the communities, including the development of tribal language policies

and education standards, attendance at summer institutes designed to develop the capacity to maintain the various languages, participation in language conferences aimed specifically at indigenous communities, and the expansion of federally funded bilingual education programs for Indian students. In this article, I will touch on all of these briefly; my focus, however, will be on the possible effects of the last indicator, expanded participation in federal bilingual programs, from a language planning perspective. My conclusion will be that while such participation can present an opportunity for language renewal, it must be approached cautiously lest the trend toward language loss be reinforced.

### **Federal Bilingual Education Policy**

The first federal Bilingual Education Act (BEA) was enacted in 1968; its official was Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The primary targets of the early programs resulting under the BEA were Spanish-speaking children of elementary school age; more specifically, the programs were aimed at the Mexican-American population of the Southwestern states, with limited participation by Puerto Ricans in the northeast and American Indians and Alaska Natives (Crawford, 1989; Ruiz, 1994).

The initial version of the BEA had a very general design, having been fashioned after the Great Society programs of the Johnson administration; its main emphasis was more on general academic achievement rather than language proficiency as such. This general aspect changed radically in the 1974 version, which introduced a definition of bilingual education which has persisted with no significant alteration until the present time; the program was to be "transitional" in its direction, with the native language used only until such time as the student could perform ordinary class work in English. The centrality of the goal of English proficiency was clear; bilingual programs were not aimed at developing or advancing the capacity to use a language other than English.

The BEA has had a mixed history, owing in large part to the administrations in charge at the time of the enactment of its various versions. The narrowing of focus to a concern with English proficiency in the 1974 reauthorization, for example, should be understood as a reaction on the part of the Nixon administration to what it considered misguided generosity from Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. Similarly, the accelerated funding levels for Title VII programs in the late 1970s testifies to the need expressed by the Carter administration to correct the underfunding of the BEA under Nixon-Ford. Financial support for federal bilingual programs peaked in 1980. Since the very beginning of the Reagan-Bush era, allocations for Title VII were severely cut; program expenditures for 1992 were the same as those for 1978, for example. Estimates on the growing size of the non-English speaking school-age population notwithstanding (Wagonner, 1988; Stanford Working Group, 1993), budget constraints will likely make any significant funding increases for Title VII in the near future difficult. The requests for 1993 and 1994 from the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs represented increases that could lead to a significant upward trend in spending for bilingual education. Of major significance, however, is the conservative takeover of Congress in the 1994 elections. Since many of those in authority to set the agenda for education (for example, the newly elected Chair of the House Committee on Education and Labor) are openly critical of bilingual education programs, it is more likely that authorization levels will be lowered to something more like those of the 1980s.

Even more significant than the funding levels, however, is the trend in the last two administrations and in the 1994 Congress to intensify the goal of English proficiency, to the point of promoting English-only instructional programs under the aegis of Title VII. This was accomplished most effectively by William Bennett, Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan (San Miguel, 1988; Crawford, 1992). Bennett expressed an early concern with what he

considered the cultural-separatist nature of bilingual programs, and with the lack of priority on learning English as quickly as possible. Early in 1982, the administration introduced its own version of the BEA, scheduled for reauthorization in 1983 or 1984. It contained a variety of new elements aimed at focusing on the neediest students, but the most controversial proposal was one in which a small percentage of Title VII funds would be set aside for "special alternative programs," programs of "structured immersion" in English where the child's native language would not be used for any instructional purpose. These explicitly monolingual programs were based on the assumption that maximum exposure to English would result in higher and more rapid proficiency in English. Even while the predominant research studies (including those sponsored and funded by the Department of Education itself) demonstrated that this assumption had no validity (see, e.g., Ramirez, 1991), both the 1984 and 1988 versions of the BEA set aside funds for English immersion programs, up to 25% of the total allocation; the current Act, passed in 1994, contains the same provision.

This history clearly indicates a trend toward an increasingly English-centered BEA. With the momentum that has been built up by the English immersion advocates in past administrations, in both budgetary and policy development, it will be very difficult to develop programs designed to maintain, much less to renew indigenous languages (of. Crawford, this issue). This can have a substantial impact on efforts within indigenous communities to maintain and develop their cultural resources. In the following section, I present some language planning concepts that should be used in our consideration of such efforts.

### **Language Policy Types**

I will deal presently with policy goals. For the moment, I am concerned with the types of language policies that indigenous communities have to choose from. Here, the simple typology presented by Cobarrubias (1983) is helpful. He distinguishes

*endoglossic, exoglossic, and mixed* policies. Endoglossic policies are those that give primacy to and promote an indigenous language of the community. In situations where the indigenous language is also a language of wider communication (LWC) with high prestige value inside and outside native contexts, endoglossic policies pose no particular practical or political problem. Thus, it seems only natural for the French or the Spanish that their languages have official status, even in the face of linguistic diversity in both Spain and France (Limage, 1990). On the other hand, cases such as that of Malaysia create great concern about endoglossic policies. Bahasa Malaysia was declared the single official language of Malaysia in 1963. The National Language Act that contained the declaration is generally explained as a measure designed to reinforce a sense of national identity following independence from British rule in 1957. But, while Bahasa Malaysia is justifiably classified as a regional lingua franca, its association with the ethnic Malays, the *bumiputras* ("sons of the soil"), in Malaysia is unquestioned; what resulted was significant social and political conflict with the large ethnic Chinese and Indian communities, who saw their life chances diminished by the new language policy (Davey, 1990). Such tensions are characteristic of pluralistic, non-LWC states that enact exclusively endoglossic policies. This may be the reason very few such states exist in the world.

Exoglossic policies are those that give primacy and promote an outside, frequently a former colonial language; the adoption of a language in a non-native context is a major indication of LWC status. This happens frequently in multilingual states where none of the indigenous languages is an LWC, and where there is a history of prolonged contact with an LWC state. The ironic political fact is that even after colonies have been able to gain their independence, they often find it necessary to adopt the former colonial language for official and public purposes, since the former colonial power and its institutions have pervaded the life of the colony. Many of the still-emerging states of western Africa, even while they struggle for recognition of their national identities,

nevertheless enact policies that recognize the status and power of LWCs (see, e.g., Akinnaso, 1989, on Nigeria; Bowcock, 1985, on Gambia; Macedo and Freire, 1987, on Sao Tome and Cape Verde; Tollefson, 1994).

Mixed policies are essentially bilingual policies; they accommodate the promote both indigenous and outside languages. There are numerous examples of mixed states, but very few in what is commonly called the West. Quechua was declared an official language in Peru, co-equal with Spanish, in 1975 (Hornberger, 1988), yet tremendous problems of policy implementation remain. Guarani and Spanish are both official languages in Paraguay (Rubin, 1985), yet the dominance of Spanish for the higher prestige functions is generally recognized in all language communities. The only example of a mixed Western state where the LWC has historically predominated is Australia, whose recent National Language Policy promotes English along with a number of other languages, including aboriginal languages (Lo Bianco, 1987). The new policy has been facilitated by the National Institute on Languages and Literacy, with headquarters in Canberra and research and dissemination centers throughout Australia. The unusual case of Australia will no doubt be monitored closely by those interested in language policy development.

### **Language Policy Development in Minority Communities**

Given the three types of language policy just described, how should minority (non-LWC) communities orient themselves to them? My attempt at an answer to this question will be preceded by a series of observations drawn from international case studies relevant to minority communities.

**(1) Most non-LWC communities are either exoglossic or mixed states.** This situation arises because of a pre-rational association between the LWC and "modernization" (and, by implication, the indigenous language with "primitivity"), attributed by Fishman (1990) to a western social science that has convinced

us that "modernisation and authenticity preoccupations cannot go together, just as authenticity preoccupations and rationality cannot go together" (p. 9). From a purely pragmatic perspective, minority language communities have made the decision to take advantage of the economic and technological power associated with the LWCs, even while making efforts to retain their indigenous languages for identificational purposes (see Crawford, this issue). In Kelman's (1971) formulation, the one represents an instrumental attachment, the other a sentimental attachment to language. In the case of mixed states, even while there may be a genuine effort to promote both languages equally, real parity is rarely achieved. More often than not, the LWC is reserved for public and powerful subjects and functions, the indigenous local language for private, community-based functions. This asymmetry is easily perceived by the children, whose motivation for learning the languages is affected by the perceived status associated with them.

**(2) Exoglossic language policies contribute to language shift.** These sorts of policies reinforce the already favored position of the LWC. And, because language policies tend to be diffused into informal contexts within the society, their influence is felt throughout the community. Recall the previous discussion about the trend toward English primacy in federal bilingual education policy. Translated into language planning terms, such a policy pushes minority language communities toward exoglossic policies favoring the LWC; thus, it reinforces the already overwhelming power and attractiveness of English for these communities, and diminishes the value of the local languages. In this atmosphere, language renewal and efforts to reverse language shift become very difficult.

**(3) There are few stable mixed states.** That is, mixed or bilingual language policies for non-LWC communities lead toward language shift. For minority communities, bilingualism is often a transitional state between monolingualism in the indigenous language and monolingualism in the LWC. Bilingualism itself tends to be transitory and unstable unless definite diglossic norms

are reinforced by strong instrumental and sentimental attachments to the languages involved. Where diglossia is weak, and where neophyte speakers do not associate language behavior with vital societal functions, the attraction of especially the younger generations to the LWC will tend to overwhelm interest in retaining or learning the local language, thus leading to its demise. This is the process described by Trudgill, who calls the LWCs "killer" languages because of their effects on language communities in contact (Trudgill, 1991).

**(4) Language maintenance and efforts to reverse language shift in non-LWC communities require endoglossic policies.** These policies, by themselves, will have little effect on language behavior. The implementation plans that accompany them must work to strengthen both instrumental and sentimental functions for the indigenous language in the community. They also must be comprehensive in scope. Generally, the more formal the contexts in which the language policy is implemented, the less effect it will have in language maintenance. Since languages live in communities, the common life activities of the community must be the targets of language policies. This means that the electronic and print media, social activities, social service providers, and other everyday centers of community life must be included in the implementation strategies by which language policies are promoted. In this way, our language policies have more of a chance to become more closely associated with our language behavior.

## **Conclusion**

I began this analysis by characterizing federal bilingual education as essentially a monolingual policy with the goal of anglicization. For American Indian and other language minority communities, this is an explicitly exoglossic policy. In combination with local initiatives, however, these communities may find a considerable amount of opportunity to intensify language maintenance efforts within federal policies such as Title VII. What I offer here is a



caution. If, in fact, federally funded bilingual education programs in American Indian communities have served the purposes of language renewal and reversal of language shift, it is testimony to the ingenuity and dedication of the staffs of those programs, not the policy itself. In economic hard times, monitoring of the basic goals of federal programs such as Title VII is more likely to decrease funding and increase the pressure to conform to its basic orientation. American Indian communities may well find in those times that the demands to implement exoglossic (i.e., English-only) policies becomes overwhelming (of. Holm & Holm, this volume). I suggest starting now on the development of endoglossic language policies that can serve to reinforce and stabilize community languages. For the time being, federally funded bilingual education appears able to be fitted into such policies. If the time comes when this is no longer possible, the language planning decisions that are made now will help communities achieve the continuity of tradition that has served them so well up to now.

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