Language and Ethnicity: Multiple Literacies in Context, Language Education in Guatemala

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Abstract

This study focuses on the research literature available in the United States on the evolution of language policy and planning issues involved in bilingual education programs in Mayan communities in Guatemala. I begin with general comments regarding language policy and planning for bilingual programs for ethnic groups within the borders of nation/states. These ethnic groups strive to maintain their ethnic, collective identities, which include their first language, in the context of social, cultural, historical, economic, and political dimensions of daily living. I then describe the research I located on such programs in Guatemala, making connections as I saw them across the dimensions indicated above. Specific gaps in the published research available are indicated in the conclusion, as are ways that the research impacts bilingual practitioners and researchers in the United States.

Introduction

Ethnic groups, Paulston (1976) wrote, have a collective heritage with "shared memories of a historical past" (p. 179) with shared cultural, social, and language components. Some ethnic groups have certain basic beliefs that are transformed by ideology. He stated that, "[I]deology serves to bind cognition, values, and behavior for particular groups of people requiring some collective response to altered circumstances" (p. 179). Changes in educational programs can be seen as alternatives, based on changes in the ideology on which these programs are created, executed, and formalized in school settings.

In the work of researchers involved in the study of language policy and planning within the field of education, particularly in second-language acquisition (Ager, 2001; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Seelye & Wasilewski, 1996;

Wardhaugh, 1987), there is recognition that language is used to various ends such as to communicate thoughts and to express reactions and ideas with other people for various purposes. Oftentimes, a specific language "is also closely related to expressing a certain nationality or identity" (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 5). When there is a state-mandated shift in language, there is also an implied requirement to change identity. Wardhaugh wrote, "there may be resistance to adopting a new language because the new identity is unwelcome" (p. 5) for various reasons. These researchers also describe the processes in which the state uses language as a tool to control various groups in its choices in the language(s) used in law, administration, education, and so forth. When the state uses language to control a group that has a strong collective sense of ethnic group identity with equally strong ties to a particular, non-official language, there is a potential for conflict. This potential conflict emerges when the strength of loyalty to the ethnic identity is more steadfast than it is to the nation/states.

Issues of language policy and planning for bilingual education programs have been a personal and professional interest of mine since I began teaching over 20 years ago. Of particular interest and concern are the roles of people formulating the policy and planning and the roles of the people for whom such policy and planning are intended. My interest in these issues as they exist in Mayan communities in Guatemala has emerged out of my classroom experiences, teaching children (both native-born and immigrants) in bilingual programs in the United States, research conducted for my master's and doctoral degrees, and to a long time academic and avocational interest in study of the Mayas and Central America. These professional, academic, and avocational interests and concerns contributed to the development and work of this study. My purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of bilingual education among Mayan communities in Guatemala, looking at the roles of various groups and historical events on the development of literacy programs in indigenous communities. The study will include some of the social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions that have influenced this development.

What Is Literacy?

Several researchers in language and literacy have identified the social nature of literacy, affected by politics, economics, and cultural discourses (Ager, 2001; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1987; Luke, 1988; Reyes, 200l; Shannon, 1989, 1998). Language use and literacy (and its development) are not necessarily limited to what happens in classrooms, in which a traditional view of literacy places its pedagogy. As such, I define literacy as the process of reading, writing, and conversing in a meaningful way in social contexts. Literacy includes not only the fundamentals of reading, writing, and conversing, but also the generation of meaning, using our connections to language and culture and our personal experiences as we ask questions of ourselves

individually and each other. The purposes of literacy include communication with others and opportunities to understand our own world, both locally and in broader spheres of interest. Strong, critical literacy, through which we ask questions and seek answers, can lead to active, more equal participation in our communities.

This communication in the social sphere includes and involves forms of literacy that go beyond the book learning in schools. Just as we read and write in many different text genres, there are ways of communicating that go beyond the word written on paper. The ways we communicate our thoughts, ideas, wants, and needs can also include the use of what Berghoff (1998) calls sign systems. These "sign systems like art, music, drama, mathematics, and language are communication systems. We use them to construct and express meaning. These systems resemble language in that each comprises forms of representation and conventions" (p. 520).

Street (1995) expands on this idea of sign symbols or multiple literacies in the social and cultural parts of our lives in which literacies provide us with opportunities to share meaning and understanding in the community outside the schools. Colonizing people from outside a particular community come in with traditionally Western, colonizing ways of teaching literacy, often and usually, in a language not that of the local community. They fail to recognize and take into account the multiple literacies (Berghoff, 1998) used by the people of that local community as they set about acculturating or assimilating the colonized people into their ways. In a study of literacy work in New Guinea, Street wrote:

> As literacy is added to the rich communicative repertoire that already exists in the receiving societies, they adapt and amend it to local meanings, concepts of identity, and epistemologies . . . the question is not what "impact" literacy has on people but how people affect literacy. (p. 109)

Similar comments can be made about the social interaction involving literacy in Guatemala. Issues of power and control are also involved with the adaptations and affects of indigenous people on literacy in their first language as well as their second language, in Guatemala and in parts of the world in which there are extremes in political, social, and economic power. These extremes affect how language is used in these contexts, as Street reiterated throughout his work.

Language Policy and Planning

Issues of language policy and planning are integral to developing both literacy and biliteracy, due to the complexity of the political aspects of the process of language policy and planning development. While policy and planning are connected almost symbiotically, they are not exactly the same.

Language policy, as Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) wrote, is the "body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned in the society, group or system. Only when such policy exists can any sort of serious evaluation of planning occur" (p. xi). Language planning, as it emerges from language policy, involves the use of language or languages in educational settings. As such it involves areas from materials development to teacher training and instruction. Historically, agencies and theorists involved in language policy and planning have been positivist, scientifically oriented in looking at ways of solving language problems in developing countries rather than viewing the multilingual/multidialectical scenario as a positive condition (Kaplan & Baldauf). This has been the case in Guatemala for decades.

Once the language policies are in place, specific areas can then be planned for developing, implementing and monitoring programs involving second-language acquisition. Implicit in these areas are educational goals found in language policies promulgated by the governing bodies, including government and educational agencies and other groups with some form of social, economic, or cultural power and sway on these policies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Tucker, 1999). While steps in language planning process have evolved over time, there are trends that have been used in varying degrees with varying purposes over time. These trends are exemplified in the steps described below (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997):

1. Which languages are taught in the curriculum or used in particular subject areas? When do the study and use of which language appear initially? For how long is each language used during the school day and for how many years? And what kind of proficiency is expected by the end of the schooling? Who decides?
2. Who teaches the languages? Are teachers native or near-native speakers of the languages? What preservice training have the teachers received? What continuing staff development is in place? And how will these teachers be placed in the school system? Who decides?
3. Which students will learn the indigenous and the official language of the country? How will students be identified and chosen? What is the nature of the parent support for the programming? Who decides?
4. What pedagogical approach (bilingual education, immersion—total or partial, one-way or two-way) is used in the systems? What materials will be used and who makes the decisions about which materials will be used? How and by whom will these materials be prepared? How will the materials be distributed across the system? Who decides?
5. What assessment processes are used for initial placement in the programs for both students and teachers? What assessment processes are used to determine student progress? How is program effectiveness assessed? What is the evaluation process for teachers? Who decides?
6. How are the programs supported financially and physically?

Ager (2001) incorporated these steps into one question: "What *actors* attempt to influence what *behaviours* of which *people* and for what *ends*, under what *conditions*, by what *means*, through what *decision-making process*, with what *effect*?" (p. 6, italics in the original). Part and parcel of this question in language planning are issues of the kinds and levels of literacy and value for education for all.

Language and Multiple Literacies in Guatemala

The Guatemalan government estimates that as of July 2004, there are 14,280,596 people living in Guatemala, 43% of whom are Mayan (Embassy of Guatemala, 2006) who speak one of more than 20 Mayan languages. K'iche', Mam, Kaqchikel, and Q'eqchi'are the largest Mayan language communities and they represent over 80% of the Mayan-speaking population (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 193; see also Richards, 1989). The numbers of people among these groups who are in various stages of bilingualism (one of the Mayan languages or dialects and Spanish) are not known. The increase in bilingualism among Guatemalans tends to be among Mayans who are becoming more fluent in Spanish, while Ladinos (Guatemalans who are of mixed Mayan and Spanish heritage) tend to maintain their Spanish monolingualism (Richards, 1989, 1993; Richards & Richards, 1997). Richards and Richards (1997) wrote:

> Most communities can be characterized as being a majority of speakers that is at least incipiently bilingual. In some of the areas . . . there are clear indications of language shift within some of the communities, with children entering school as Spanish dominant bilingual speakers. (p. 194)

Historical Context of *Castellanización*

Issues surrounding the use of Spanish commenced in Guatemala in 1524, when Pedro de Alvarado and his military and religious followers arrived. As part of Spanish efforts to dominate and subject the Mayans, "official Crown policies were established to castilianize the Indians and convert them to Christianity" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 195). Overtly, this process of *castellanización* involved teaching Spanish to the Mayans for the purpose of making them Catholic and good, productive workers for the Crown. Over the centuries of Spanish colonization, various policies were put into place to prohibit accommodation or allowance for Mayan languages, although several of the missionaries in Guatemala used Mayan dialects discretely for religious instruction (Richards, 1989; Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997; Waggoner & Waggoner, 1971).

These efforts to develop and maintain *castellanización* among the Mayan continued after Guatemala became independent in 1821. The new, independent government decreed that Spanish would be used as "the medium of nationhood

and the vehicle for unifying a fragmented peoplehood" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 195). As part of this decree, the government officials worked hard to rid the country of Mayan languages and dialects, even exhorting the parish priests to work toward that end in their local communities. While the government pushed hard for the extermination of indigenous languages, the practicality of actual implementation was moot. The status of schools and governmental organization in the 1800s was not sufficiently widespread or structured to both provide instruction in Spanish literacy and enforce it, especially in areas away from cities. As Richards and Richards (1997) pointed out, "illiterate and monolingual, the Maya were integrated into the State system only to the extent which was needed to provide the physical labor to drive the country's export agricultural economy" (p. 195). This pattern of decrees, quiet bending of or ignoring the rules by various groups, existed during the centuries of Spanish colonialism, during the 1800s and into the middle of the 1900s (Richards, 1989; Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997).

Incipient Reforms

During the 1940s, there were some ebbs and flows in more tolerant attitudes in legislation and reformist movements in the country as a whole and also for the indigenous population, including the issue of language use and instruction. For a 10-year period (1944–1954), there were efforts toward social integration that included abolition of various laws that worked to keep the Mayans in their places. Movements for peasant organizations and unions also developed over these years (Richards & Richards, 1997). A growing movement for indigenous groups was occurring in various parts of the Americas.

In 1945, the Guatemalan government established the *Instituto Indigenista Nacional* (*IIN*) to deal with the challenges of the "Indian problem." Included in the *Instituto* was a session for teachers working with indigenous students. This session focused on policy and plans for a special program that involved teaching Mayan students to read in their first language before learning to read in Spanish. The *IIN*, which had the support and advice from missionary linguist advisors, supported this process of literacy first in the first language. It was to be a channel for literacy in the national language of the country, still part of *castellanización*. To that end, these advisors developed a Mayan language alphabet in which, among other things, diacritical marks were deleted, geared toward sound or spelling patterns in Spanish, to the point that those Mayan dialects and languages that were not translated to Spanish easily were left unwritten (Richards, 1989, 1993; Richards & Richards, 1997).

These missionary linguist advisors were affiliated with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a Protestant group based in Dallas, Texas, who became officially involved in work with the Guatemalan Ministry of Education in 1952. By 1954, SIL had produced and published several books, dictionaries,

and printed folktales in Mayan languages, in addition to its considerable work in the translation of the New Testament, which was their primary focus (Richards, 1989, 1993).

In 1954, Castillo Armas took over the government, and newer literacy efforts began, including one in bilingual literacy in the Q'eqchi' area. Over the next several years, the major thrust of the government was to assimilate the indigenous people into the mainstream Ladino society, because they were considered to be the "primary hindrance to national economic development" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 197). In 1965, with the new constitution, Spanish became the official language of Guatemala. To that end, the Education Law enacted the same year mandated that Spanish be used as the language of instruction. Article 9 permitted the use of the indigenous languages as a conduit toward *castellanización*. Out of these efforts came programs like the Radiophonic Schools, designed to teach literacy, Spanish and Mayan language, health issues, and civic education (Morren, 1988; Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997).

Another program that began in 1965 was the Bilingual Castilianization Program, designed to "eas[e] the transition from the mother tongue to Spanish" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 197). Mayan children would begin school a year early to learn to read and write in their mother tongue while they also received instruction in Spanish. They were taught by bilingual promoters. Morren (1988), affiliated with SIL when his article was published, indicated that these bilingual promoters were not teachers but rather educational assistants. The prerequisites for these positions included completion of sixth grade, being bilingual in a Mayan language and Spanish, and the completion of a workshop in literacy methodology in the mother tongue and in Spanish as a second language. Although the bilingual promoters filled a void in bilingual instruction for indigenous students, with only 4 weeks of training they were not trained teachers.

Richards (1989) indicated that the materials used in the content areas for the four main Mayan languages were the same, with the exception of the language texts specific to each of the particular languages. She wrote that "the content, like the illustrations and the overall curriculum, is thus 'pan-Maya Indian', which reinforces a specified objective of the Bilingual Program to fortify a unified Maya identity" (p. 102). The bilingual materials used in these programs used a Mayan-language alphabet that could help transition students to Spanish literacy. This was the same alphabet developed in 1962 by the *IIN* with help from SIL. While not SIL's intent, it did serve to provide a way to use Mayan languages in schools. This very basic use of Mayan language had some positive effect in children's learning, but the students did not have skills in Spanish strong enough to do well when immersed in Spanish-only classrooms (Morren, 1988; Richards, 1989; Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997).

In 1980, with the National Bilingual Education Project and money from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a 4-year pilot bilingual education program began to expand the use of indigenous languages until children could demonstrate satisfactory Spanish fluency. How this satisfactory fluency in Spanish would be determined was not described in the research. Part of the project included the production of beginning readers in the largest four language groups, along with reading materials in the content areas for children from preschool to second grade. The bilingual programs in this project were still transitional in design, yet provided literacy instruction for more years in their first language to help them transition better to Spanish literacy instruction. The new programs were introduced year-by-year beginning in the lowest grade first in 10 schools in each of the four major language regions. The successes observed include the facts that the pilot school students stayed in school longer and showed higher achievement in Spanish reading and content areas than did students in the control schools, who were taught literacy only in Spanish. The numbers of students and schools involved in both the pilot groups and control groups were approximately the same according to the article (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 199). By the time the project was due to end in 1987, bilingual education had become institutionalized.

Events and Issues Affecting Bilingual Programs in Guatemala

During the years in which SIL was producing texts in Mayan languages, Castillo Arias acted to make Spanish the official language of Guatemala, and the Bilingual Castilianization Program and National Bilingual Education Project came into being, other more dangerous events were affecting Mayan communities. Increasing warfare between the insurgent forces and government forces and a simultaneous reign of terror on the part of the Guatemalan military aimed its animosity at civilians, particularly Mayan civilians.

Since it was often difficult for the government to find the insurgents (both their identities and their locations), the armed forces went after Mayans in their own small communities during 1979–1984. Thousands of the surviving Mayans escaped in the more remote mountain regions, into Mexico, or to Guatemala City. Those who were able to escape to Guatemala City had to hide their Mayan identity as best they could, by not wearing their *traje* (traditional community clothing) and by using Spanish instead of their Mayan dialect, which was with difficulty, given their educational opportunities during those years (Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997).

Just as a study of language policy and planning in Guatemala must include issues of the decades of warfare in the last half of the 20th century, it must also include issues related to the economic context of the country during the time period. During the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, several articles by researchers from developed countries appeared, addressing the "Indian problem" as it

affected development and high illiteracy rates in Guatemala (del Aguila, 1987; Lourié, 1975, 1982; Micklin, 1990; Psacharopolous, 1993; Roberts, 1971; Sexton, 1972). The general tone of these articles is exemplified in the piece by del Aguila, who was affiliated with SIL at the time his article was published. He wrote that "the precarious living conditions of the rural populations of Guatemala . . . are both the cause and effect of the high illiteracy rate . . . [that] rural education . . . [is] quantitatively and qualitatively deficient" (p. 380). Del Aguila indicated that these deficiencies in rural education, coupled with his identification of the largely indigenous population in the rural areas and the extreme poverty in Guatemala, especially the rural areas, are the causes of Guatemala's underdevelopment. Del Aguila's point of view was reflected in the thinking of some of the representatives of organizations like SIL and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), who were active in education in Guatemala.

Over and above the scenario described above, there are some specific economic realities that have affected the lives of the Mayans in Guatemala, realities that have direct impact on their schooling possibilities. With significantly divergent voices and styles, Micklin (1990) and Menchú (1983) spoke of land tenure issues and their effects on migration in search of jobs in other parts of the country, agricultural and otherwise. Due to seasonal migration, indigenous workers had difficulty being in positions to take advantage of educational possibilities available for them. Steele (1994) also indicated the costs to families in sending children to school, whether those costs involved the loss of income children brought into the household or purchasing clothes and school supplies so that children could attend school.

Richards and Richards (1997) pointed out the incongruity of the land tenure protocols and the warfare of the government:

> While the state conducted a terror campaign against the Mayan communities, the Rios Montt and Mejia Victores military regimes in power during the period 1983–1985 opened up a political opportunity that actually allowed the broader exercise of Mayan cultural expression, political power, and the use of indigenous languages within the education section. (p. 199)

Rios Montt, an Evangelical clergyman, also received counsel from SIL. While this organization was, and still is a strong advocate for indigenous language literacy, the connotations of the missionary work of the organization and their connection with Rios Montt are ironic. During the same period cited in the above quotation, Rios Montt continued his savage policy against the insurgents and the Mayans, which included the assassination of some of the bilingual promoters, senior technicians, and teachers in the schools serving indigenous students (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 199).

The brutality continued under the leadership of Mejia Victores, who led a coup d'état and seized control of the government in 1983. The insurgents

were chased deeper into the highlands during this period; international pressure and sanctions generated a more democratic course in 1984 (Richards & Richards, 1997). Out of this international pressure came the Constitution of 1985, which included a section that stated "the intention to recognize, respect, and promote the multicultural and pluralinguistic nature of Guatemalan society" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 200).

Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe

The infrastructure set in place to orchestrate this process was the *Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe* (*PRONEBI*). Its mission was "to strengthen Mayan ethnic identity, and to promote the 'integral' and 'harmonious' development of the Indian population with the linguistic context of a plural Guatemalan society 'so that it may respond to its own authentic needs and legitimate interests'" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 200). According to Chesterfield, Rubio, and Vásquez (2003), *PRONEBI* consisted of five components:

> Administration and Supervision . . . of bilingual education throughout Guatemala; Curricular Development . . . of bilingual texts and instructional materials; Infrastructure that carried out the printing of bilingual texts and guides as well as the purchase of texts and furniture for rural schools; Training . . . preparation of bilingual promoters for preschool, in-service training of teachers, and university training for supervisors and personnel [at] *PRONEBI*; and Evaluation that measured the academic performance of students in the program. (p. 4)

Bilingual education was to be the instrument through which the cultural heritage of Guatemala, including indigenous languages, would be maintained and strengthened, as part of the struggle for equality (Hendrickson, 1996; Richards, 1989; Richards & Richards, 1997).

Richards and Richards (1997) identified organizations such as United Nations Infant and Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), USAID, and a few religious organizations that provided financial support for a number of grassroot organizations including the Society for the Integral Development of the Guatemalan Family; Mayan Language and Cultural Band; and the Guatemalan Institute of Distance Radio Education. "These Mayan education are designed to affirm ethnic identity and promote Mayan language use and literacy acquisition" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 205).

They also indicated that "the human resource capital . . . [came] through hands-on experience working within *PRONEBI*" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 206), with money coming from UNESCO and the UN Development Program for instruction for Mayan intellectuals/teachers provided by Guatemalan universities, particularly *la Universidad Mariano Galvéz* and *la Universidad Rafael Landívar* (Richards & Richards, 1997).[1]

As of 1993, 1,000 bilingual schools, where Spanish and eight Mayan languages were used for instruction, existed under *PRONEBI*'s aegis. In those areas where K'iche', Q'eqchi', Mam, and Kaqchikel are spoken, schools have developed a parallel form of bilingualism—students develop literacy in both their indigenous language and Spanish from preschool to fourth grade. *PRONEBI* faced an incredible amount of work to proceed from policy to planning and implementation of its mission. This mission included the following elements:

1. Figure out how many people spoke which Mayan language and where;
2. Develop written versions of the language, ranging from dictionaries to written grammar texts, text books and other reading materials;
3. Provide training in linguistics in Mayan languages for native speakers;
4. Include and train Mayan participants in what is involved in building bilingual programs;
5. Train bilingual teachers, with a level of literacy in one of the indigenous languages strong enough to teach;
6. Work to overcome serious, deep-seated mistrust of community members (both families and teachers) of instruction in the language of those who had held power for decades. (Richards, 1989; Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997)

Mayanist Movement

Also significant were the differences in ideology of the people involved at both the policy and planning levels. Richards and Richards (1997) believe in some ways that *PRONEBI* has metamorphosed as a government agency into a conduit for the Mayanist movement that places Mayan languages at the core of Mayan ethnic identity, which needs to be both strengthened and protected. Some of the bureaucrats of the *Ministerio de Educación* and some of the international donors, parents, and teachers believed that *PRONEBI* was too Mayan; others, especially the incipient groups of Mayan intellectuals, believed that it was not sufficiently Mayan (Richards & Richards, 1996, 1997). In the context of the year in which *PRONEBI* was established (1985) with the government or military forces still looming in the country, these groups of Mayan intellectuals feared that this agency was one more "insidious state apparatus leading to Mayan language death and ethnocide" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 202).

Indeed, Raxche' (1996) wrote that "[a] broad state policy that respects the cultural rights of the Maya is needed, not isolated programs such as *PRONEBI* that conform to the colonial vocation of the Guatemalan state and society" (p. 82). This policy, he avers, must have at its core a "pluralist approach [that] seeks cooperation and unity through diversity" (p. 83). These cultural rights, Raxche' believes, are not limited to language but extend also to the weaving of

traditional trade, traditions and customs related to medicine and other ways of living, social structures that reflect Mayan cultures, more forms of multiple literacies. In 1986, another Literacy Law was passed that required schools to use students' first language for literacy instruction for monolingual children, while leaving open the opportunity for Mayan language speakers to become literate in Spanish once they became literate in their first language. By 1992, a model of bilingual literacy education was developed for adults. Nothing was indicated in this model about opportunities for monolingual Spanish speakers to become bilingual, with a Mayan language as their second language (Richards & Richards, 1997, pp. 206–207).

Various groups, particularly those involving Mayan intellectuals who were focusing on bilingual education and linguistics, began working in 1987 to develop and decide upon an alphabet, and eventually developed materials to use in literacy instruction in classrooms. The alphabet that came out of this work was one that Mayans themselves developed to write their own languages. The *Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes* made this alphabet official in November, 1987. It was met with considerable opposition, especially from the *Ministerio de Educación* and SIL who would stand to lose considerable status and power as producers of most of the Mayan language texts and materials until that moment (Luján-Muñoz, 1998; Richards, 1993; Richards & Richards, 1997).

Since 1987, when the Unified Alphabet was made official, a number of publishers have developed materials for cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical purposes. Some of these organizations were run by Mayans. These materials were not limited to use in the bilingual programs for the Maya but also were found in the form of newspapers for children and adults, newsletters, and radio programs. They have been developed for private schools and for adult literacy classes, with the intent "to affirm ethnic identity and promote Mayan language use and literacy acquisition" (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 204).

Development of Mayan Language Schools

In 1990, the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas* was created after some time in the planning, and the Specific Rights of the Maya People were made official. The creation of the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas*, according to Tujab (1987), was an unexpected yet important impetus in the politics involved in the revitalization process. These rights emerged from the work of the *Consejo de Organizaciones Maya de Guatemala* of the National Dialogue for the Peace of Guatemala. The declaration included eight demands regarding language issues:

1. Officialization of the Mayan languages at the level of each linguistic community;
2. The obligatory learning and use of Mayan languages by public service functionaries;
3. The use of the Mayan languages in the legal system and in education programs;

4. The economic sustenance and autonomy of the Academy of Mayan Languages;
5. The expulsion of the Summer Institute of Linguistics;
6. The implementation of emergency programs to resuscitate languages in danger of extinction (Xinca, Itzaj, Tektiteko);
7. The restructuring of the Ministry of Education in order to allow the Maya to make their own decisions regarding Maya education programs, bilingual personnel and instructional materials;
8. Finally, the urgency for the production and publication of books, magazines and newspapers in the Mayan languages. (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 207)

A result of the creation of the Academy and the official status of the Specific Rights was that groups have combined their efforts and energies at grassroot levels for the revitalization of Mayan languages (Richards & Richards, 1997, p. 204).

Both Ajpub' (1998) and Brown (1998) indicate the need for Mayans, whether they are intellectuals or grassroot cultural workers, to be involved in the pan-Mayan movement, to keep control over their linguistic and cultural destinies, and to show "that our [Mayan] culture has a great deal more to contribute to Guatemala than we [Mayans] have hitherto been able to provide" (Ajpub', p. 171). Ajpub', a Kaqchikel Maya, has chosen this course as he has moved through the educational system, identifying the social cost of the contact with the Ladinos "when sociocultural, political, and economic inequality and injustice characterize the relations between the cultures sharing the same territory" (p. 171).[2]

As both Ajpub' (1998) and Garzon (1998) pointed out, though, Mayans can choose other directions that affect their lives and cultures. Ajpub' consciously chose to search for ways to show the value of the Mayan contributions. Others, he wrote, chose "to retreat within the confines of our world, not allowing outside influence to affect us" (p. 171). Another direction taken by some involves an integration of members, especially young men, of some Kaqchikal communities into national life in ways that assimilated them into Ladino culture to the point that they have absorbed the Ladino disdain and animosity for indigenous people (Garzon). Garzon also wrote that language choice could be a strong point of conflict for some Mayans. On the one hand, language is a vital symbol of Mayan identity and yet, as Garzon suggests, Spanish is the language of power and economic success in the dominant Ladino society. Spanish is also a symbol of Ladino values, which include the domination and belittlement of the Mayans (Garzon, p. 194).

In the early 1990s, a number of private, community-based *Escuelas Mayas* came into existence. These *Escuelas* came about due to a "generalized disaffection with the official bilingual education program to a growing language

revitalization and ethnic affirmation sentiment, and . . . more and more Maya themselves [possess] increased technical capability in all aspects of formal education" (Richards & Richards, 1996, p. 217). The *Escuelas* are affiliated with various combinations of organizations, some of which include programs for adult literacy; some are organized in groups located near each other. The schools use bilingual texts produced by *PRONEBI* and materials in Mayan and Spanish as a second language produced by *la Universidad Rafael Landívar*. Some of the *Escuelas* in the Kazchikel area have used pedagogy and materials that have come out of the same university, while schools in other areas have generated their own variations of pedagogy and materials (Richards & Richards, 1996).

Morren (1988) conducted a study of schools that came into being as a result of the Bilingual Education Law in 1965. In the context of language planning, it is important to look at the possible reasons he identified for the success he saw in the pilot schools during the years of his study. These reasons include the participation of native speakers of the Mayan languages in the development of teacher training and relevant curriculum and materials in the schools, making sure that there were sufficient amounts and varieties of books and other reading materials, and teachers and administrators who were native speakers.

Over the last 15 years or so, this integral involvement of native speakers of Mayan languages has extended to considerable energy, dialogue, thought, and work focused on the revitalization of Mayan languages. There has been an increasing leadership of Mayan intellectuals, people who have been and still are immersed in the study of Mayan languages, in language policy and planning from the grassroots level up, and, in varying degrees, in the official agencies in the government and university levels. They have approached this revitalization process in various projects, including a textual analysis of the Annals of the Kaqchikels (Warren, 1996), and those studying hieroglyphic writing in codices and in stone structures. (Schele & Grube, 1996; Sturm, 1996). Hendrickson (1996) pointed out that the *Academia de las Lenguas Mayas* has also worked for the revitalization of the significant traditional practices in the use of *traje*, religious practices, and community structures, both political and social (p. 159, p. 161). These areas are all part of the multiple literacies that make up Mayan cultural identity, an important part of this revitalization.

These trends in working in bilingual education and the revitalization of Mayan languages coupled with increasing resistance against the violence of the Guatemalan government, especially through the military, have contributed to a heightened awareness of a common Mayan identity that transcends local communities. This pan-Mayan identity emerges not only from their efforts to survive the violence but also from efforts to educate their own ethnic communities about Mayan identity and heritage, and extends to those people

in other ethnic communities, to increase communication and cooperation of Mayans across Guatemala (Luján-Muñoz, 1998; Winn, 1992/1999).

Sturm (1996) identified one of the challenges that the Mayan intellectuals have in this process, a part of pan-Mayanism, which is the tendency that uses to categorize it into a political movement and serves only to minimize what pan-Mayanism is. Added to this challenge of labels is the fact that in the initial movement of Mayan intellectuals included people who tended to live in urban areas and were well-schooled in the Guatemalan educational system. The reading and writing of the glyphs crosses social borders between Mayans who have been highly schooled (and have crossed some cultural borders within the country) and those who are less schooled (and have not crossed cultural borders as much). The glyphs are read and written in the form of signs rather than words; they can be used by almost everyone to communicate in one form or another. This last point is one of the reasons that Schele began Maya workshops on glyph writing for members of local communities during the mid-1980s. Brown (1996) ties into the work of pan-Mayan movement, the language revitalization and the use of languages by looking at the functional and symbolic values involved in language use. He stated that "[m]any of the activities associated with revitalization in such arenas as bilingual education and institutions like the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala* (*ALMG*) and *Coordinación Cakchiquel para el Disarrollo Integral* (*COCADI*) take place in Spanish" (p. 174). In the establishment of pan-Mayan identity, the functional value of Spanish increases as the "s*ymbolic* value of the Mayan language spoken at home" (p. 174) increases. The main thrust of Brown's article is the great significance of Mayan language and the loyalty of many Mayans to their language as a significant, integral element of their identity, and of the growth in pan-Mayanism.

Summary

In the last 40 years, significant studies have been made in Mayan cultural revitalization, particularly in the area of Mayan languages. In some cases, the bilingual education programs have come about under the aegis of government officials in the *Ministerio de Educación* or related agencies and leadership from the executive branch, either voluntarily or due to serious pressure from governments and organizations outside Guatemala. Improvement, at least in the enactment of laws, which involve policymaking, has taken place within the context of several years of warfare, domination and serious struggles that have affected the lives of thousands of people. Contributing to these strides has been the work of people in the Mayan resistance, the focus of which has been on not only against the killing and destruction of people's livelihood and the land, but also on the preservation and revitalization of Mayan languages and traditions. Some of the same non-governmental organizations

from outside Guatemala that have pressured the government for language programs for the Mayans have also worked in support of these Mayan resistance and revitalization movements.

The pivotal Peace Accords signed in 1996 signaled a watershed event for many significant issues, not the least of which was an official, imposed end of the military violence.[3] Embedded into the Accords were serious, broad commitments to human rights—to dignity, to identity, to health and security, to education (including education in their mother tongue) among many others related to economic, political, and social status. Again, significant pressure was placed on the Guatemalan government by other governments and non-governmental organizations (UNESCO and the UN among others) involved in human rights and language maintenance or revitalization issues.

Some specific components (Cabrera & Cifuentes, 1997) regarding language and education from the Peace Accords include the following:

1. All languages will be used in the school system to develop literacy in the students' own language or the language usually spoken in the community; this would include intercultural and bilingual education, even in the *Escuelas Mayas* and other indigenous educational systems; (p. 84)
2. Specific points of policy were included to not only recognize but also to strengthen Mayan cultural identity, Mayan access to both formal and informal education, incorporate Mayan culture and pedagogic values into the curriculum and ways of teaching; (pp. 88–89)
3. The government will provide the funds necessary for implementation; (pp. 98–99)
4. Women will have equal access to education and practices discriminatory against women will be removed; (p. 112)
5. The government infrastructure will be put in place to facilitate and implement the policy and planning changes agreed upon in the Accord; (p. 115)
6. The changes necessary for constitutional recognition of the Mayan, Xinca, and Garífuna people and of the fact that the Guatemalan State is a pluricultural, national, multilingual, and multiethnic union; (p. 181)
7. The premise that socioeconomic development has to include sustainable economic growth and social justice. (p. 105)[4]

These components reflect the significance of language as part of identity for ethnic groups living in Guatemala. These statements put on paper an agreement between the Guatemalan government and representatives of civilian groups who suffered at the hands of the militia and the insurgents during the Civil War. These components signify the official possibilities for honoring, expanding, and enhancing the use of indigenous languages in the acquisition of literacy, for the Mayans and also for the Garífuna and the Xinca.

This commitment in an official document indicated, for the first time, that the Guatemalan government was committed in broad terms, including financial, to expand language policies and planning in bilingual education across the country. It officially recognizes the pluricultural, multilingual, and multiethnic tapestry that exists in Guatemala. It links socioeconomic development to social justice. On paper, the Accords promise these components; it still remains to be seen in published research how deeply and broadly the policies and commitments have been put into effect.

The issues from the Peace Accords enumerated above are of particular importance to language revitalization and bilingual education for the Mayans of Guatemala. Several of the sources have been published since the Peace Accords were signed in 1996. However, there has not been much published research readily available in the United States regarding: (a) how the programs and changes have been implemented; (b) how the financial support has been provided (and dispersed); (c) who has been involved in the language policy making and planning; (d) what and how materials are prepared for classroom instruction, not only for literacy but also for content areas; (e) who the teachers are and how they are trained; and (f) what kind of continuing education is provided for teachers. Also unknown are the processes for encouraging and providing bilingual programs for Ladino students, another entire direction for possible research on bilingual education in Guatemala. These are areas for further research and sharing of results in the professional literature.

A few researchers presented statistics regarding indigenous and non-indigenous students in various schools, numbers of students who leave school (and return later), and the connection between literacy/educational attainment in the family and family socioeconomic status (Gallardo de Cano & Maduro, 1997; Lourié, 1982; PREAL, 2001; Psacharopoulos, 1993; Steele, 1994; Vera-Valderrama, 2000). However, the statistics do not provide consistent information regarding trends in various aspects in education over time due to the lack of consistent data collection (e.g., census-collection methods) which in turn affects the reliability and validity of the data. One example is the lack of accurate reporting of actual expenditures on schooling or what kind of and how much financial help the Guatemalan government has received from internal or external organizations. It is not clear if this statistical information is available, either before or after the Peace Accords. Also missing from this quantitative research is a clear definition of what the researchers mean by literacy and illiteracy. Due to these gaps in current information available in the research literature in the United States, there is a need to conduct further research regarding how the bilingual programs for indigenous students function. What are the discrepancies between the policy ideals of the Accords and the realities of the educational process in the schools (in the multiple literacies of public, private, and community-based settings) for children and adults? What, if any, changes have had to be made in the process? Who and what has been involved in the required honing? More questions will emerge as further research occurs.

There are a few implications for bilingual educators and researchers in the United States. Researchers, both those in the classroom and at the college level, need to work together to articulate their work (both teaching and research) to promote better teaching and knowledge of how and why students learn in bilingual programs in general. Each year, children from Guatemala and other Central American countries walk through our school doors. Classroom teachers need a more clear understanding and appreciation of Guatemalan immigrant children's school experiences in order to better serve their needs. Researchers at both the college level and in classrooms can work collaboratively, sharing their funds of knowledge and support for learning with and for children. There are also significant similarities in the processes of language policy and planning in Guatemala for Mayan language groups to those same processes in the United States for indigenous groups who have been educationally underserved for decades.

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Endnotes

[1] J. B. Richards, one of the major researchers in Mayan languages in Guatemala and cited frequently in this article, teaches at *la Universidad Rafael Landívar*.

[2] Kaqchikel is spoken in highland communities not far from Guatemala City, a fact that affects the social, cultural, economic, political, and linguistic context of these communities.

[3] According to some, fear of the military has not abated; see González, 2001.

[4] These seven components were translated from the original text in Spanish in Cabrera and Cifuentes (1997) by the author.