



*Societal Multilingualism  
in a Multicultural World  
in Transition*

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## Waves of Transition

**M**ultilingualism and multiculturalism are the defining characteristics of society, for movement of people from very early times has brought different ethnolinguistic groups in contact with each other. This wandering has been motivated by different factors, sometimes the result of conquest and colonization, at other times of opportunities related to economic, religious, and social benefits. The languages and cultures of these waves of people have fared differently depending on the shores to which they traveled and the strength of their impact after their arrival. The waves have either washed out the shores, changed their composition and appearance, or left them almost intact. And thus, the languages and cultures of intruders have completely taken over indigenous ones, changed them, or allowed them to subsist on an equal basis. In the process, the ethnolinguistic characteristics of the intruders themselves have not remained untouched by contact, sometimes disappearing completely, at other times changing radically, and in some instances even being preserved.

Waves reflect transition and a changing reality. But the waves of migration, of languages and cultures impacting on shores, have always been there, and especially here, in the United States, a country of

immigrants. What has changed is that today we not only find an increase in the external waves of (im)migrants here or anywhere, but, most importantly, we have internal waves that challenge the assumption that the identity of already existing dominant groups can remain untouched by the external waves. It is our subjectivity which is in transition, for we have to acknowledge for the first time that all of us have been affected in some way or another by ethnolinguistic diversity, and that contact is the very make-up of our identity as a nation. One can say, then, that this process of redefining our subjectivity is responsible for an increased recognition of the long-standing linguistic and cultural diversity in the United States, and in the rest of the world.

Within this multicultural world in transition, within this ocean of waves, linguistic diversity allows the expression of the complexity of differences, at the same time that it preserves the harmony and unity of our beautifully different world. Just as an ocean without waves would be flat and unimpressive, a world without differences in language and culture would be uninteresting and limited in its vision. Just as waves break the monotony of the ocean, thereby providing it with its unison of rhythm and sound and also its motion, a world with linguistic diversity causes some divergence, but it also resonates with sounds and brings about its dynamism. Further, just as waves stir up the bottom of the ocean, as well as its surface, language and cultural diversity disturb the consciousness of many, while changing the face of the world.

As language teachers in the United States, we have a central role in this changing seascape, for we can protect and develop the minority languages of ethnolinguistic groups. And we can also help the English-speaking majority acquire non-English languages, some spoken by minorities in the United States, others by dominant groups outside the United States, and still others by minority groups outside the United States. We can validate language and cultural differences as unifying rather than alienating, and we can spread this new vision of brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Our language teaching role changes depending on the characteristics not only of the shore, but also of the waves. When we teach a language, it is important to ascertain not only the sociolinguistic position of the language that is being learned within society, but also the position of the group that is learning the language within that society. True, wealthy Latin Americans wanting to do business with the United States will have a greater desire to learn English than Maori, the language of indigenous New Zealanders. But for Latin American refugees, with little education and few economic resources and who have been victims of United States

policy in the area, learning English might be difficult indeed. Thus, our task as language educators encompasses not only knowing the language and culture of the people whose language we teach, but also the language and culture of the people whom we teach. Without taking into account the characteristics of both the shore and the waves, language teaching cannot be effective. Schools, as microcosms of society, must take note of societal reality. Thus, before we turn to language teaching, we will discuss societal multilingualism from an international perspective, and especially through the United States experience.

## Multilingualism in the World

Although there are approximately two hundred modern states in the world, there are between 4,000 and 6,000 languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). The exact number of world languages is impossible to determine, since it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between languages and varieties of languages, and languages vanish and emerge continuously. We know, however, that there are about a thousand languages in Africa and another thousand in the New Guinea area. Although the number of Aboriginal languages in the Americas, Australia, Asia, and the islands of the Pacific has decreased in the 20th century, there are still approximately one thousand American Indian languages, about two hundred in Australia, hundreds of languages in mainland Asia, and several hundred more on the islands of the Pacific and the neighboring seas. Europe itself has about fifty living languages (Grey Thomason, 1988).

Only forty of the approximately two-hundred modern states are officially bilingual or multilingual (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). This means that eighty percent of modern states do not recognize the multilingualism in their midst; the remaining twenty percent often do so only on a limited basis.

Multilingualism has been traditionally associated with the Third World, and monolingualism with the First World. However, multilingualism is the norm in the First World also. Even in Europe there are only five states where only one indigenous language is spoken. These are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Portugal, and San Marino (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). And European countries that were once regarded as highly linguistically homogeneous, such as France, Great Britain, and Spain, have in the last decade increasingly recognized their regional minorities.

In France there had been a policy of repression of all languages but French since the period of Louis XIV. After conquering Catalan-speaking

territories in 1659, Louis XIV proclaimed in a 1700 Edict that “all public acts ... shall be set and couched in the French language under pain of nullity” (Dorandeu, 1986). Despite the linguistic repression of the last three hundred years, there are today seven minority languages in France. Three of these languages are spoken solely in France: Occitan or Languedoc, Breton (the only Celtic language spoken on the European continent), and Corsican (spoken on the island of Corsica). In addition, four regional French languages are also spoken in countries which border France: Basque, Catalan, German, and Flemish or Dutch. Little has been done to overturn the 1887 Article of Legislation that stated that “French only shall be used in schools.” And even today most teachers of these regional languages are volunteers. But increasingly, the voice of the Teaching League is being heard as it proclaims that

the recognition of multilingualism within French borders is only secondarily an historic reparation. Primarily, it is a process of adaptation; the ability to speak several languages will be a vital necessity for those citizens of the year 2000 whose education has already begun (Dorandeu, 1986, p.10).

Likewise, the history of English language imperialism of the British Empire obscures the linguistic heterogeneity present in the United Kingdom. Five indigenous languages are spoken besides English: Lallans or Scots (the vernacular language of Scotland south and east of the Highlands), Cornish or Kernewek in the area known as Cornwall, and three Celtic languages. The three Celtic languages are Irish or Gaeilge in Northern Ireland, Scottish Gaelic or Gaidhlig in the highlands and islands of Scotland, and Welsh in Wales. These five languages have undergone different fates. At one extreme is Cornish or Kernewek with its last native speaker dying in the early nineteenth century. Efforts to revive Cornish are underway today, and there are now between 50 and 100 people who can converse in it. Welsh, however, was proscribed from schools in 1870, confirming the dominance of English in the United Kingdom. But in 1967 the Welsh Language Act removed some linguistic restrictions and an increasing proportion of government services are now provided in Welsh. Welsh is now the main medium of instruction in many primary schools and is taught as a second language in almost all schools throughout Wales. Tertiary education is also available in Welsh (James, 1986).

The linguistic heterogeneity of Spain was also silenced during the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, when only Castilian was recognized. However, the third article of the new Spanish Constitution of 1978 recognizes Castilian as the official Spanish language of the state, and the other Spanish languages as official in their respective autonomous communities. Thus, Catalan, Basque (or Euskera), and Galician are now

obligatory in schools and increasingly used in public administration, publications, and mass media in their respective regions (Ní Mhaoláin, 1986; Vila i Moreno, 1990).

Multilingualism is present in the officially monolingual world, where linguistic diversity is the norm of the land. Moreover, in countries that adopt an officially multilingual policy, linguistic heterogeneity is a lot more varied and complex than the overt policy seems to suggest. The limited support of multilingualism exhibited by modern states even when they declare themselves to be multilingual is best understood if we look at India, the Philippines, and Tanzania, countries that are officially multilingual.

The 1961 Census in India identified over one thousand language varieties (Pattanayak, 1971; Srivastava, 1988). However, the Indian Constitution recognizes only fourteen languages: 13 indigenous to the region, and Sanskrit, the classical language. Although most states of India were established on linguistic grounds, there are certainly areas with high linguistic heterogeneity where language rights are seldom granted to those who do not speak the regional language. For example, since 1956 schools in India have followed a three-language formula, teaching English, Hindi, and the regional language, or another indigenous language in Hindi-speaking areas. Children whose mother tongue is other than the regional language are not taught their language in school (Sridhar, 1991).

A similar situation exists in the Philippines where over seventy languages are spoken natively, the most widely used being Tagalog. Spanish had been the colonial language until 1898 when the United States stepped in and made English the language of education. In 1940 a national language based on Tagalog was developed, called Pilipino in 1959 and Filipino in 1987. With independence in 1946, Spanish, English, and Filipino became official, and the 1973 Constitution made English and Filipino official languages. Although Filipino is now clearly the *lingua franca*, that is, a language used for communication between speakers of different tongues, most people refuse to see Filipino as the only national language. Yet, only Filipino and English are taught in school, and most official services are solely available in these two languages (Sibayan, 1970, 1991).

In Tanzania there isn't a single predominant ethnolinguistic group. And yet, Swahili, structurally a Bantu language with much Arabic influence, has been promoted as a *lingua franca* and adopted as both the official and national language. In education, schools use the children's mother tongue for the first three years of elementary school. But by the fourth grade,

Tanzanian schools switch to Swahili as the medium of instruction (Abdulaziz, 1971, 1991).

The decisions to restrict the language rights of linguistically diversified populations in all the cases discussed above can be seen as instances of state language planning. It has been felt that spreading a particular language will result in “nation building,” that is, the development of an awareness of belonging to one nation. Coupled to this is the feeling that development and modernization, that is, the rapid spread of new technologies and ideas through schooling, will be better met by imposing one common language of education (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1990). But this “nation-building” has occurred at the expense of “person-demolishing,” that is, the destruction and tearing down of self that is the result of taking away a language from its people. As the world shrinks and homogenizes through technology, preserving human integrity and different visions must increasingly become an avowed goal in building nations.

The numerous officially monolingual states might lead one to believe that linguistic homogeneity is natural and desired as a goal. Yet, the tension that one senses in modern monolingual states is many times caused by the imposition of linguistic homogeneity on a population that needs linguistic diversity in the same way that it needs poets. Officially monolingual states are inhabited by monolingual individuals who strive to become speakers of other languages, and bilingual and even multilingual individuals for whom competence in two or more languages is important. Their motives for becoming and remaining bilingual are varied. On the one hand, they wish to increase the inter-communication and inter-connectedness of humanity, and that, of course, depends on being able to speak the other’s language. But beyond the **practical communicative function** of language lies its **symbolic and metaphoric function**. It is this latter function of language that allows us to unearth new meanings, expand images, and connect with our self-identity. Multilingualism brings closer the explosion of the galaxy of signifiers and signifieds which liberates men from their pedestrian existence. And as long as language resides in people, and not in states, there will be a need for language diversity, not merely for utilitarian communicative reasons, but for poetic liberating ones.

The transition in which our multicultural world finds itself is also the movement from **nation-building as person-demolishing** to a new sensitivity in which **nation-building must include person-building**. *El círculo se cierra* [“The circle closes itself”] as Octavio Paz, the Mexican Nobel Prize winner, has said; and to escape the homogeneity of today’s uniformly technological world, human beings must be allowed to express differences and to reach into their imaginative selves, full of unique poetry

and creativity, as much as to their inter-connectedness with others. More than ever today, as the world becomes a small homogeneous circle on the surface, there is a need to break out of the circle. And the person-demolishing which once accompanied nation-building cannot be sustained any longer.

The officially monolingual stance of modern states has been the direct antithesis of human liberation, being responsible many times throughout history for oppression and genocide. Linguistic repression has had different results, sometimes silencing an ethnolinguistic group only temporarily, and other times succeeding in robbing it of its voice. An example of a group that has been victimized by a dominant group and silenced are the Maoris of New Zealand.

New Zealand was colonized by Maoris, Polynesian people who possibly came from the South China mainland. In 1840 the British government and the Maori chiefs signed the Waitangi Treaty, ceding sovereignty of Aotearoa, the original Maori name for New Zealand, to Queen Victoria in return for protection of Maori rights over their “lands, villages and all their treasures.” But the promises of the Treaty were ignored, and the Maori became a disadvantaged minority in the modern state of New Zealand. English was imposed as the language of school and government, and Maori was repressed until it became apparent that it would cease to be a living language within another generation. Only then, when Maori could no longer compete with English, were efforts made to revitalize it. The *kohanga reo* or “language nest” movement consists of pre-school centers where Maori is the only language used, and it has spread quickly since 1982. Since 1984 some schools which use Maori as the sole medium of instruction, except for an hour a day devoted to English, have been established in the cities (Benton, 1990, 1991). These schools are known as *kaupapa Maori* and together with *kohanga reo* constitute New Zealand’s brave attempt to maintain the dynamics of the circle, supported through the poetic creativity owed to one’s own ethnolinguistic identity as it interconnects with others through English, the world’s greatest *lingua franca*. Again, the “other” (English-speaking New Zealanders) is beginning to rely on the “self” (Maori-speaking New Zealanders), just as the “self” relies on the “other.” It is nation-building starting to rest on person-building, just as person-building must rest on nation-building.

Conquest and colonization were the hallmarks of the British Empire in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and of its greatest colony, the United States, in the 20th century. The linguistic repression that accompanied the past British Empire and the modern imperialism of the United States silenced much language diversity as English gained ground (for an

extensive treatment of English language imperialism, see Phillipson, 1990). When confronted with the power of English, the number of speakers of some languages has become so negligible that there are instances of "language death," as Dorian (1981) has shown for Scottish Gaelic. Other conquered and colonized ethnolinguistic minorities have experienced "language shift," that is, giving up their first language and adopting English as their native language (Fishman, 1964).

But silence no longer characterizes today's ethnolinguistic minorities. The sounds of technology and computers fill the globe, and English as the chosen language of the technological media is being rapidly adopted as the functional international language. The spread of English as a Language of Wider Communication (LWC) has been vastly documented (see, for example, Fishman, Cooper, and Conrad, 1977; García and Otheguy, 1989; Kachru, 1986). As Phillipson (1990) has said:

[English] has a dominant position in science, technology, medicine and computers; in research, books, periodicals and software; in transnational business, trade, shipping and aviation; in diplomacy and international organizations; in mass media entertainment, news agencies and journalism; in youth culture and sport; in education systems, as the most widely learned foreign language (p. 5).

Whereas the **British Empire** was successful in silencing many by its repressive linguistic policy including the harsh imposition of English, the attractive **Empire of English** seems to have had the opposite effect. Many want to learn English as a second language, but few are ready to adopt it as their sole medium of expression. In fact, the "functional load" assigned to the English language in its new Technological Empire clearly preempts its link to a specific ethnicity. Thus, the ethnic non-distinctness of the English language seems to reinforce the "symbolic load" of the non-English language, allowing many to learn English while maintaining their mother tongues.

Increased **language maintenance** of "little languages" of "little people" (Fishman, 1989) has been a by-product of the ethnic boom that has characterized the last decade (Fishman, 1985). However, equally importantly, this ethnic revival, this interest in language diversity, has been sparked precisely as the antidote to the spread of the homogeneity of English, a language which for many groups holds significant economic value but little emotive value, a language with a high functional load but little symbolic load. The uniform sound of Technological English has been variegated by the distinct sounds of ethnolinguistic diversity. Thus, in a seemingly contradictory way, rather than being responsible for linguistic homogeneity, the spread of English might have sparked the vitalization

and revitalization of many little languages, struggling to keep their distinct link to a unique ethnic identity and their liberating symbolism.

The allocation of English to a purely de-ethnicized functional load, and the protection this offers to languages with only an emotive ethnicity-language link, is precisely the development that has promoted our contemporary interest in bilingualism. When English was the language of the colonizers and conquerors, much language shift occurred, and the temporary bilingualism of the oppressed minority was said to be **subtractive**:  $L1 + L2 = L2$ . But as English has been limited to a supplementary functional load, language maintenance has been increasingly possible, and the resulting bilingualism is **additive**:  $L1 + L2 = L1 + L2$  (for a discussion of the difference between additive and subtractive bilingualism, see Lambert, 1977).

The stable use of two languages in society by assigning them different functions has been called "diglossia" (Fishman 1967, 1980). Diglossia (Greek roots for two languages, di-glossia), the use of two languages for different purposes in a **societal group**, is different from bilingualism (Latin roots for two languages, bi-lingual), which is the use of two languages **by individuals without societal support**. In many societies, the reduction of English to an international functional language has made it possible to keep it distinct from the non-English language which is most often the language of the heart and soul. As a consequence, societies have become more diglossic or multiglossic, able to sustain more than one language in an effort to inter-connect with the international community and intra-connect with their innermost feelings.

When states recognize multilingualism in their midst as a valuable resource, they must come up with a diglossic arrangement in which they allocate different societal functions to their languages. Diglossia depends on the concept of boundary, that is, being able to protect one language from the encroachment of the other by compartmentalizing their respective uses, that is, using one language for specific functions or in defined geographical areas and the other language for other functions or in other areas (Fishman, 1972). There are two kinds of diglossia, "personality diglossia" and "territorial diglossia" (Fishman, 1967).

The diglossic arrangement that occurs when English is acquired and stable additive bilingualism results in the entire speech community is clearly an instance of personality diglossia. Bilingual persons then use one language in some "domains," or situations of language use, and the other language in other domains. In this arrangement, English is simply the "other" language and is kept away from the ethnic world. The ethnic language is then solely used in intra-ethnic communication (that is,

communication within the group), and English is solely used for inter-ethnic communication (communication with those outside the ethnic group). Examples of personality diglossia from the United States experience are the Pennsylvania Germans and the Hassidic Jews.

The Pennsylvania Germans, also known as Pennsylvania Dutch, came to the United States from Germany as early as 1863. The Old Order Amish and Older Order Mennonites are the most visible Pennsylvania Germans, for they wear distinctive dress, use horse and buggies, and have generally no electricity. They speak Pennsylvania German at home and in the community. English is learned at school where it is the language of instruction. High German is used exclusively for religious rites and ceremonies and people generally have only passive knowledge of it (Huffines, 1980).

Hassidic Jews use *loshn-koydesh*, the traditional amalgam of Hebrew and Aramaic, to read hallowed biblical and post-biblical texts; whereas Yiddish is used for intra-group life, and English for inter-group communication. Hassidics also wear distinctive dress and have strict compartmentalized behavior codes (Fishman, 1982a).

When each of the two languages is given official status in one geographic area and the other is restricted to another geographic area, we speak of "territorial diglossia." This is the situation in Belgium, Canada, and Switzerland.

The creation of Belgium one hundred and fifty years ago politically united the Dutch-speaking Flemish of the north and the French-speaking Walloons of the south who had lived there for over a thousand years. Although the French speakers have always been numerically fewer, they traditionally had been dominant, with French being the national language until 1932 when Dutch was given official status in Flanders. Now, however, the Flemish economy is stronger. In 1963, in an effort to halt the erosion of Flemish, a linguistic boundary was fixed. Flemish became the official language in the north and French in the south, thus guaranteeing some parity among the two groups (Lijphart, 1981).

Canada was settled by the mostly Protestant British and the mostly Catholic French who were brought together when Canada became a state. Québec was originally a French colony, but was conquered by the British in 1759. French speakers have always been the numerical majority in Québec, but the small group of English speakers has controlled its economy and political life. In 1977 Bill 101 made French the only official language of Québec, creating a territorial diglossia that would guarantee the maintenance of French in the region and would give the Francophone Québécois control over their own socio-economic resources. French is

now the language of the workplace, government publications, signs, advertisements, and posters in Québec (Cook, Saywell, and Ricker, 1977; Gendron, 1972).

In Switzerland there are four national languages: French, German, Italian, and Romansch, which are official in four cantons or territories. Swiss who are bilingual (or multilingual) continue speaking the language of their cantons while adding those of neighboring cantons with which they come into contact (Billigmeier, 1979; Kolde, 1988).

Language diversity has always defined humanity. But dominant states have often used repression of the linguistic heterogeneity in their midst to gain political and economic benefits for themselves. This nation-building has traditionally been constructed at the expense of person-demolishing. But as linguistic homogeneity through the spread of English becomes a threat, and as people risk losing the treasures of their souls that are contained in their different languages, nation-building must also encompass person-building. Non-dominant ethnolinguistic groups have started to fight back to maintain their little languages and even reverse the language shift that they have undergone (for a treatment of *Reversing Language Shift* (RLS) see Fishman, 1991). As English becomes the language of **inter-national** communication, non-English languages affirm their **intra-national** character, and thus diglossic or multiglossic situations are created which guarantee the bilingualism or multilingualism of society. The world has become smaller through technology and its language, English. Perhaps language planners must now view English differently; in its role as the instrument of inter-communication which allows us to discover the wealth of languages that make up humanity and its concomitant role of bringing us closer so that we may see the intricate detail of languages and cultures that make all of us different.

## Multilingualism in the United States

It is in the context of the powerful international role of English that one must study multilingualism in the United States. English has clearly been the *de facto* dominant language since the British colonists introduced it in North America, although the United States has always been a multilingual country.

In 1980 there were 34.6 million language-minority people in the United States. This means that one person in seven in the United States speaks a language other than English at home or lives with people who do (Waggoner, 1988, p. 69).

Spanish-speaking Latinos make up the majority of this group. In March 1990, the Hispanic-origin population was about 20.8 million, or about 8.4% of the total population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). The Latino population consists of different national-origin groups. Mexicans comprise 64%, Puerto Ricans 11%, Cubans 5%, Central and South Americans 13%, and other Hispanics 7% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

However, the language resources of the United States are rich and varied beyond Spanish. In 1980 at least one million people in the United States spoke French, German, Italian, or Polish, the four languages, in addition to Spanish, that have had the greatest number of non-English speakers in the United States throughout the twentieth century (Fishman, 1985, p. 111). And thirty languages had at least 100,000 speakers in 1980 (Waggoner, 1988, p. 80).

Furthermore, linguistic heterogeneity in the United States has increased since the quota system which had preserved the overwhelmingly northern European character of immigration was abolished in 1965. The Immigration Act of 1965 adopted instead the criteria of family reunification and occupational skills for immigration to the United States. Most of the immigration to the United States today is from the Third World, mainly from Asia and Latin America. For example, from 1981 to 1985, immigration from Europe made up only 11%, with 48% coming from Asia, 36% from Latin America, 3% from Africa, and 2% from Canada (Bouvier and Gardner, 1986).

The increased number of Asians in the United States has also done much to propagate linguistic heterogeneity. It is not possible to estimate the number of Asian languages spoken in the United States today, but we know they include not only various Indian languages, but also Chinese languages, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, the Miao and Yao languages, the Mon-Khmer languages, and Philippine languages (Molesky, 1988, p. 55). In addition, enormous linguistic heterogeneity exists even within these groups. For example, Li (1983) reminds us that: "Among just one small group of recent immigrants, the so-called 'montagnards' of southern Vietnam, there are tens of different native languages" (p.4).

Non-English mother-tongue claiming has increased dramatically since 1960 (Fishman, 1985, p. 129). And non-English institutional resources in the form of educational and religious institutions, publications, and broadcasting efforts, have also greatly increased (Fishman, 1985).

Despite the wealth of non-English ethnic languages in the United States, there has been little interest in the maintenance and development of these languages. Initially these "ethnic languages" were used extensively in the

colonial period and during the birth and development of our nation as a way to integrate the immigrants. But by 1880, when immigration started to swell as the United States economy shrank and when immigration changed character from being mostly of northern European extraction to being mostly of southern and eastern European origin, the restriction of ethnic languages began. The 1880 change of immigration, coupled with World War I, led to the massive Americanization movement which made teaching in languages other than English illegal in public and private schools in thirty-four states. It wasn't until 1923, in the famous *Meyer v. Nebraska* case, that the Nebraska statute that prohibited the teaching of languages other than English was declared unconstitutional (for a history of U.S. language policy see Heath, 1977; García, 1985; Grant, 1980; Leibowitz, 1978). But with that judicial case, attention shifted from tolerating the use of and teaching of "ethnic languages" to that of allowing "foreign languages."

Foreign language use and teaching recognizes non-English languages as existing and being spoken only outside the United States, rather than by ethnolinguistic minorities within this country. In the last quarter of the 20th century in particular, we have been unable to reconcile our adamant repression of non-English ethnic languages with our wish to encourage non-English foreign languages. Whereas immigrants are forced to undergo a process of language shift which makes their bilingualism subtractive (Ethnic Language + English = English), we attempt to develop additive bilingualism among the majority population (English + Foreign Language = English + Foreign Language). It is in this conflictive situation that we must view bilingualism in the United States today.

Our frustration with the lack of bilingual competence in our citizens was manifested clearly after Sputnik. At that time foreign language teaching became important in the national agenda, and the learning of foreign languages was encouraged for defense purposes. The National Defense Education Act of 1958, the Fulbright-Hays Act, as well as the Foreign Languages in the Elementary School movement (FLES) were all efforts to educate a bilingual citizenry. But despite these efforts, competency in languages other than English remained abysmally low.

The first one to call attention to the nation's waste of ethnic non-English language resources was Joshua A. Fishman, in a classic study from the year 1966 entitled *Language Loyalty in the United States*. Two years afterwards, the first Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) was passed, authorizing the use of federal funds for educating students who lacked English competency using their native language. Bilingual Education programs validated the existence of

valuable ethnic languages in the United States, and the ensuing controversy whether programs should be **transitional** (that is, only until the child learned English, and consequently leading to monolingualism) or **maintenance** (that is, ensuring the maintenance and development of the ethnic language, and thus bilingualism) reflected the tension between the earliest historical position of using the ethnic language transitionally to integrate immigrants (1789-1880) and the Civil Rights context of affirmation and maintenance of ethnolinguistic characteristics (1960s and 1970s).

There were other validations of ethnic languages in the United States during the decade of the 1970s. One was the judicial decision known as *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974 which guaranteed the right of non-English-speaking language minorities to an education which met their linguistic needs. Another was the passage of the 1975 Amendments to the Voting Rights Act which recognized the use of ethnic languages in elections. Yet another measure which confirmed the existence of ethnic languages in the U.S. was the Court Interpreter's Act of 1978 which provided for the use of interpreters in courts of the United States.

But this period of recognition of ethnic languages in United States society was short lived and followed by one of restriction, reflecting the historical period of xenophobia from 1880 to 1923. In 1981 President Reagan, speaking against bilingual education before the National League of Cities, stated that it was "absolutely wrong and against American concepts to have a bilingual education program that is now openly, admittedly, dedicated to preserving their native language" (Feinberg, 1981). And thus, the public discourse on bilingual education shifted from being one in which the goals were either bilingualism (maintenance programs) or monolingualism (transitional) to one in which the only option was to aim for monolingualism. Today's bilingual education discourse only includes how best to secure monolingualism, either through **transitional bilingual education programs** (which use the child's native language temporarily) or through **structured immersion programs** (which use only English). (For a discussion of how the bilingual discourse has shifted from one which included the option of maintenance vs. transitional in the 1970s to one whose only option is transitional vs. structured English-only immersion in the 1980s, see Casanova, 1991.)

In 1981 Senator S.I. Hayakawa from California, a linguist and former university president, introduced an amendment to the U.S. Constitution declaring English the official language of the nation. U.S. English, an organization whose goal is to "maintain the blessing of a common language—English—for the people of the United States," was founded in 1983. Since then the organization has grown from a few hundred to

350,000. By the end of 1988, 16 states had adopted laws or constitutional amendments making English their official language. (For a discussion of the history of the English Language Amendment, see Adams and Brink, 1990; Marshall, 1986; for more on the history of U.S. English, see Imhoff, 1990.)

Curiously enough, just as the attack on **ethnic non-English** languages became forceful, interest in **foreign non-English** languages was renewed. In 1979 the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, appointed by President Carter, declared that the incompetence in foreign languages was "scandalous" and called for the reinstatement of foreign language study in schools. By 1986 many states had established foreign language as a requirement for high school graduation (see the report by Draper, Graham, and Johnstone, 1986). And in the 1980s we have seen the proliferation of courses in foreign languages for specific purposes (LSP), linked especially to fields such as business, engineering, and nursing (Uber Grosse and Voght, 1991). Despite official policy to mandate the study of non-English languages, our competence in these languages remains extremely low.

To illustrate the schizophrenic double-bind in which we find ourselves today, on the one hand restricting ethnic non-English languages, and on the other, trying to promote foreign languages, where the two may even be exactly the same language to be taught to the same people, let us take the case of Arizona. In 1988 Arizona passed one of the nation's most restrictive English-language amendments. Yet, the following year, it mandated foreign language instruction for all students in grades 1-8 to be fully implemented by 1999. On the one hand, non-English languages, especially Spanish, were restricted; on the other hand they were promoted. Fortunately, in 1990 a Federal district judge declared that Arizona's constitutional amendment making English the language "of all government functions and actions" was a violation of federally protected free speech rights. This was perhaps a small recognition, a ray of hope in U.S. policy, that nation-building cannot occur at the expense of withholding rights to non-English languages and the person-demolishing that ensues.

The time is ripe to discuss our subjectivity in transition as a nation. We need to understand the role of non-English languages in the United States for all ethnolinguistic groups, including the English-speaking majority. It is the responsibility of the language teaching profession to lead this discussion.



## Teaching non-English Languages in the United States

The failure of foreign language teaching in the United States has been extensively documented. By contrast, our success in teaching English internationally has been overwhelming. The United States has been successful in language education. So, how might the Teaching Foreign Language (TFL) profession learn from the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) profession?

The answer to this important question that would go a long way toward solving our foreign language incompetence is not solely a pedagogical one, although it is true that ESL methodology is more advanced than FL methodology, simply because it covers a broader spectrum and more funds are spent developing it. Nor is the answer solely based on differences in funding levels, though TESOL efforts, admittedly, are funded at higher levels than are TFL efforts. In fact, Troike (1977) attributes the United States' success in teaching and spreading English to "the expenditure of large amounts of government and private foundation funds in the period 1950–1970, perhaps the most ever spent in history in support of the propagation of a language" (p. 2). But the greatest difference between TFL and TESOL lies in the different roles to which the languages we teach have been assigned in United States society and internationally. Only an understanding of languages in society could impact on the teaching of foreign languages in the United States. Only professionals who understand that their own role is limited by societal views on language and its position in society could succeed in their task. For our job is not simply to teach foreign languages, but to impact on our nation's subjectivity in transition with regard to non-English languages.

Perhaps the most important reason for the abysmally low levels of non-English language competence among U.S. citizens has to do with our inability to attribute to language anything other than **instrumental** value. We argue that language minorities do not need their "little" languages in the highly technological and modern U.S. society. Likewise, we propose that non-English languages are only needed to increase our business potential within the international community. But the United States already holds the key to the international language *par excellence*, English, and to propose that other languages are needed solely for international business purposes is limiting indeed.

What language educators have to realize is that, while we pursue the **instrumental and business side of English**, we must emphasize the

**human and sentimental side of non-English languages.** We must learn the lesson proposed by Johann Gottfried Herder in the 19th century. Herder, who became a champion of German against imperial French, argued that human dignity and creativity would be preserved only if the diverse languages of people were allowed expression. We must espouse the ideas of Benjamin Lee Whorf, an American, who a century later proposed that each language reflects the different reality and world view of its speakers; and that to suppress those languages would make the world an empty, mechanized and inhuman place (for a discussion of the impact of Herder and Whorf on ethnolinguistic diversity, see Fishman, 1982b).

Our language minorities must maintain and develop their ethnic languages because they are the key to their innermost feelings, their creativity, their poetry. Correlatively, our language majority must learn those languages because they are the spark to the creativity and poetry of people, those here and there, and because those languages are able to break up the monotony of the utility of English. In short, foreign language educators must realize that, in order to succeed, they must assign their non-English languages a function other than the utilitarian one which English has pre-empted. Only by maintaining and reinforcing this diglossic relation between English as the utilitarian language of a homogeneous technological society and the non-English languages as the chords which create both the dissonance and the waves of feelings with which people recreate themselves will we be successful in teaching non-English languages.

What are some concrete steps that foreign language educators could take in order to promote the successful learning of non-English languages in the United States? There are two other roles besides that of teachers that educators must assume: one is that of language planner, the other is that of language sociologist.

### The Language Planner

Language educators must ally themselves with language planners, both internationally and nationally. All successful language planning must consist of both "status planning," raising the prestige of the language, and "corpus planning," expanding the language's corpus in order to meet the new linguistic demands of society (for a discussion of language planning, see Eastman, 1983; Cooper, 1989).

In their **status planning** efforts, language educators must work to raise the prestige of all non-dominant languages (with regard to English) as valuable human resources, and as the key to creativity. In order to do this,

attention must be paid both to the non-dominant languages of "little" people in the U.S. and elsewhere, and to officially recognized and even highly prestigious languages which must compete with English as the Language of Wider Communication (LWC). Status planning must then encompass both an international and a national dimension.

Internationally, our position must be founded in the realization that our difficulties as foreign language educators lie in teaching non-official languages (viewed as unimportant) in a *de facto* officially monolingual English-speaking context. Languages have different values in different societies, and this impacts differently on the learning process. It may be as difficult to teach French to monolingual English speakers in the United States, as it is to teach Occitan to French monolinguals in France. And so whether we teach French, German, Italian, or Spanish, our understanding must be not only of those languages in their dominant contexts, but also of the ethnolinguistic minorities within those countries. It is most important for our profession to understand the sociolinguistic position of non-dominant languages in the world, for that is indeed the position to which non-English languages have been relegated in the United States.

We must then become language activists, able to sustain our interest in language teaching because languages preserve diversity, creativity, and human dignity. We must support some of the international declarations in favor of dominated languages: the Charter of the United Nations (1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950), the U.N. Declaration of Children's Rights (1959), the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966) (for a review of these international covenants, see Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1989). In addition, we must become involved in the passage of future declarations. For example, at a seminar in Recife, Brazil, organized by the International Association for Cross-cultural Communication (AIMAV) and UNESCO, a declaration was adopted which recommended that "steps be taken by the United Nations to adopt and implement a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights which would require a reformulation of national, regional, and international language policies" (Skutnabb-Kangas 1990, p. 29). The *Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes* (FIPLV) has become very active in revising and expanding the document and assuring that the declaration will be passed. We must join forces with our European counterparts, who are pushing to ensure that European children learn two foreign languages at school, but do so within the context of linguistic rights for minorities as well as majorities. We must also make contact with international bodies

such as the Human Rights and Peace Division of UNESCO, the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages of the European Community, the Council of Europe and its Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the Central Institute of Indian Languages, as well as with all the regional authorities in the countries whose languages we teach. We must listen to the European Community's voice when it says:

All attempts to unite Europe by imposing a uniform cultural system have ended in strife and failure. ... [T]he Europe of tomorrow must be founded on consent and mutual respect. ... [M]ultilingualism and cultural diversity are fully compatible with European concepts and ideals (Unity in Diversity, n.d.).

Based on our international experience, we must then become non-English language activists within the U.S. context, promoting language policy within the U.S. that would sustain our need for multilingualism and cultural diversity. We could become less complacent about our attitude with regard to U.S. English, and become forceful allies of English Plus, a coalition working on behalf of language rights, established in Washington in 1987. A step in the right direction was taken with the formation in 1979 of the Joint National Committee for Languages (JNCL) and later the advocacy organization National Council for Language and International Studies (since 1987 NCLIS, formerly Council on Languages and Other International Studies). Its members are most of the leading foreign language professional groups. In a statement entitled "Language Competence and Cultural Awareness in the United States", reprinted in 1984 in the *Modern Language Journal*, they take the position:

We hold that all persons in our culturally rich and linguistically diverse nation should be provided the opportunity and be encouraged to become proficient in more than one language to a degree of mastery consonant with their need and aspiration. ... It is through the knowledge of languages and cultures that we best begin to know and comprehend the scope and significance of human experience in history, from ancient times to modern. It is through the knowledge of languages and cultures that we best learn to tolerate and appreciate cultural and linguistic diversity at home, to understand our contemporaries abroad, and so achieve our full potential as citizens of the world (p. 44).

Our position would then dictate that departments of foreign language and bilingual education, international studies, and ethnic studies would cease to exist as separate entities. Only by joining forces would the status of non-English languages in the United States increase, as would our status as a profession, and the likelihood that we will be successful in teaching non-English languages.

But besides raising the status of non-dominant languages both abroad and in the United States, language educators must become active in **corpus planning**. We must understand that language adapts to new cultural

environments, and that a language used by an ethnic community or by English speakers in the United States will have different characteristics from one used only in a foreign context. Rather than reduce the languages we teach to strict corpus characteristics codified and standardized in the country of origin, we must make room for language contact (for a treatment of language contact, see especially Weinreich, 1953). We must become advocates of the natural language adaptation that occurs when speech communities are in contact, rather than insisting on a strict puristic norm. By demanding a standard responding to another cultural reality, we may move people further along the road to monolingualism. As Einar Haugen (1977) has said: "It would be better to bend than to break" (p. 101). If our interest is in encouraging bilingualism, then we must study the language as spoken in the speech community not only abroad, but also in the United States. And we must help codify the reality of the new U.S. variety as we validate its existence. Efforts along these lines have been made especially for Spanish in the United States (see, for example, Coulmas, 1990; Elfas Olivares, 1983; Elfas Olivares, Leone, Cisneros and Gutiérrez, 1985; Wheritt and García, 1989), but they remain to be clearly articulated for other less commonly spoken languages. In order to become active in corpus planning, language educators must learn to gather linguistic data in the speech community, and it is to the role of language sociologist that we now turn.

### The Language Sociologist

Language educators must also be responsible for studying Sociology of Language in order to understand the position of the languages they teach in the society from which it comes (the waves) and to which it comes (the shore).

The education of language educators can no longer be limited to the language, history, literature, and culture of the people, coupled with some courses in pedagogy and methodology. It must also include sociology, anthropology, and psychology. We must learn to quantify linguistic behavior, to gather data on language proficiency, use, and attitudes; but we must also discover how to observe the right phenomena and interpret our quantitative and qualitative data within the right socio-historical framework.

Overt language policy is important, and language educators have, as we have just seen, a very important role in both status planning and corpus planning. But the covert language policy that is embodied in the attitudes of our nation toward non-English languages has a very important impact

on our ability to teach non-English languages (for a discussion of the difference between overt and covert language policy, see Schiffman, 1990). By studying the sociolinguistic position of the languages we teach and the attitudes which the majority holds toward them, we may begin to impact on the implicit policies that language attitudes and prejudices impose. In short, additional sociolinguistic information may be the key to combat the linguistic prejudice which is rampant in the United States today.

### The Language Teacher

Finally, we come to the role for which we have been trained. But here also, there are lessons to be learned from the study of societal multilingualism, both for the school and for the classroom.

As previously observed, schools which are serious about teaching non-English languages must establish a compartmentalized **diglossic curriculum**, with English functioning as the language of instrumental value within U.S. society, and the non-English language being emphasized for its human and creative value (either in the context of the humanitarianism of being able to communicate with others who do not speak English in the U.S. or abroad, or of being able to communicate with humanity's creativity and expression of feelings). This is the kind of curriculum that exists in such private bilingual schools as Hebrew Day Schools or Le Lycée Français. In Hebrew day schools all secular subjects are taught in English, reserving Hebrew for Biblical Studies and modern Israeli History. In Le Lycée most instruction takes place in French, with English used only in the teaching of reading and writing skills and American History, English language functions necessary to succeed in standardized exams, work, and life in the United States.

Most non-English instruction in the United States takes place at the secondary or post-secondary level. The departmentalized nature of the secondary and tertiary schools assures a diglossic arrangement between English and the non-English language. The non-English language teacher must then capitalize on this curricular compartmentalization and emphasize the different societal function of the non-English language, either as a foreign language abroad or as an ethnic language in the U.S. The curriculum must then cover not just the structure of the language and the folkloric culture of its people. Emphasis must be made on the socio-historical context of the speakers of the language (either abroad or in the U.S.), including their history, politics, sociology, psychology, geography, art, music, literature. When we teach non-English languages in the U.S., we must create for the learner the socio-historical context which gives the

language its social life and function. Only then will we be successful non-English language teachers in the United States.

But beyond the separation of languages and the assignment of different functions to the languages being studied, one must learn from a study of *Sociology of Language* that the non-dominant language must be **protected** from the encroachment of the dominant one. This means that sufficient time and appropriate prestige must be given to it. Although spending more time teaching the non-English language would be one way of raising the prestige of the language, another one may be to use it more frequently in the school community. For example, this author has seen the successful promotion of non-English languages in ethnic schools where only a forty-five minute period is spent teaching it. But beyond the language classroom, the language is also used by the principal, the secretary, other teachers, parents, and it is written on the bulletin boards and walls, and in letters sent home (García, 1987-1988; García and Otheguy, 1985, 1987). If bilingualism were truly our goal, we would insist that others aside from language professionals make use of their non-English languages in public. We could plan multilingual activities and assemblies and encourage multilingual bulletin boards and newsletters; and both adults and children, inside and outside the language class, would be involved in these activities.

This protection to the non-English language must also be extended at the secondary and tertiary levels. In high school, the study of non-English languages must carry the same prestige and importance as the study of math, science, and English. Schools must insist that students become proficient in a non-English language, in the same way that they demand math proficiency. In colleges and universities, the study of non-English languages should carry adequate academic credit and should be available to both undergraduate and graduate students.

In the classroom, the teacher could stop emphasizing mechanical communicative skills at the expense of creative ones. Language is an act of creation, and students must be engaged in taking risks when learning a language, and in reaching for **interpersonal communication** with others, as well as for **intrapersonal communion** with a speech community. This does not mean that the language classroom must abandon the emphasis on communicative oral skills that has been the core of the communicative language teaching movement of the 1980s (for a discussion of communicative language teaching, see, for example, Savignon, 1983; Brumfit and Johnson, 1979). Rather, it means that as we teach students to engage in dialogue with others, we also help them focus on the metaphors and images that each language weaves for its own speech

community. Students could be encouraged to use oral language creatively, as well as for communicative purposes. Neither are we advocating a return to a literacy-only approach in which only written texts hold the key to language. The inclusion of folklore, poetry, story-telling, music, art, theater can take place from the first day of language teaching in a purely oral-visual form.

In cases where literacy exists, the poets and the literary writers must be included in the curriculum, as well as the historians and the sociologists. It is not enough to teach our students to read newspaper articles or write letters and essays in non-English languages. Again, English has preempted this functional aspect of language in the United States. It is important to have students read literary masterpieces in the original and to have them write creative prose.

This is not an easy task. But it could be accomplished if we focused on the vertical aspects of language, rather than solely on its horizontal aspects. As a utilitarian nation, we often view language only as a resource for communication with others, its horizontal aspect. But we must unearth and discover the deeper meaning of language that is contained in its metaphors, its word play, its images, its vertical aspect. Our foreign language teaching practices must be radically different from those of the English teaching profession. While the English teaching profession emphasizes accuracy and correctness, and encourages good communication skills and technical writing, we must focus on creativity. While the Teaching English profession focuses on reading **lots of pages**, getting the **exact and only meaning** which the computer can grasp, and **essayist writing**, our profession must focus on a **few lines** of text from which to discover **new and multiple meanings** so that students can **create other written realities**.

Of course, non-English languages should not be robbed of all their utilitarian value. But emphasizing solely their economic or functional value will leave us with a language-incompetent nation. Only by connecting to the metaphoric and human value of non-English languages in our lives will we be able to understand that our nation-building can no longer sustain the silencing of non-English voices, the suffering and pain experienced by many in our midst and portrayed in such belletristic accounts as Rodriguez (1981) for Mexican Americans, Asch (1953) for Jews, Bell (1976) for South Slavs, Ets (1970) for Italians, Rolvaag (1965) for Norwegians. Then, in the same context of linguistic diversity as multiplicity of metaphoric creativity, we can upgrade the value of foreign languages in the United States.

Increasingly, United States English monolingual citizens reach in to discover a link to their ancestral past, to their mother tongue, and to their connection with a multilingual humanity. As English spreads internationally and provides us with inter-connectedness, non-English languages must increasingly become windows to our deeper selves, and to the magic and creation of words and worlds.

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