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MONOGLOSSIC LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICIES AND LATINX STUDENTS' LANGUAGE

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Introduction

The U.S. is a highly multilingual country, with more than one in five Americans speaking a language other than English at home. Notwithstanding its multilingualism, the country has shaped itself as an English-only-speaking country. The language of schooling, with few exceptions, has been English. Spanish, the language spoken at home by over 40 million people in the U.S., is usually considered a “foreign” language and taught as such.

This chapter starts by viewing the language practices of U.S. Latinx students, considering how their language and bilingualism have been constructed by the dominant society and schools. We then reconstitute the notion of bilingualism for U.S. Latinx in the 21st century, focusing on its dynamism and complexity. We consider how monoglossic language ideologies have erased Latinx students' dynamic language practices and translanguaging. This has resulted in the inadequate monoglossic language education policies that we describe here. We end by reflecting on the question of why monoglossic ideologies persist despite having contributed to the continued educational failure of many Latinx students.

U.S. Latinx Language Practices and Schooling

U.S. Latinx students have different linguistic practices – some use Spanish all or most of the time, some may not use Spanish at all or use it seldom, some use English all or most of the time, some may not use English at all or seldom. Many speak Indigenous languages to different degrees (Pick, Wolfram, & López, 2011).

In schools, some Latinx students are classified as “English language learners” (ELLs or ELs) when they are assessed as not having sufficient English literacy for school tasks. These students receive some form of what is called “English as a second language” instruction, and sometimes different types of bilingual education. Beyond ELLs, Latinx bilingual students are seldom recognized. Yet, regardless of their language use or English proficiency according to school assessments, bilingual Latinx students engage in fluid language performances that go beyond what is legitimated in school as English, Spanish, or Indigenous language.

U.S. Latinx language practices are expected to fit within the paradigm that schools have *constructed* about standard “academic” language, usually meaning “academic English.” When Spanish is taught, mostly in secondary schools, it is validated only as a “foreign language” subject.

For those classified as ELLs, Spanish is sometimes used as a medium of instruction in *transitional bilingual education* as a tool to “remediate” what is seen as the lack of English. Recently, Spanish as a medium of instruction has enjoyed more acceptance as a result of its commodification in a neoliberal globalized economy. *Spanish immersion* programs for English-speaking students, and *dual-language immersion* programs for both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students have grown in the U.S. But here again, Spanish is taught not as the language of the community, but as what Michael Mena (Mena & García, 2020) has called “a language from nowhere.”

The reluctance to recognize Latinx students’ bilingual practices results in much of their miseducation. The emphasis in education of those classified as ELLs ignores the elephant in the room – the fact that many U.S. Latinx are indeed bilingual with varying linguistic performances that fall along a bilingual continuum (García, 2006).

According to the U.S. Census (American Community Survey, 2018), there were 8,543,454 Spanish speakers aged 5–17 in the United States in 2018. Of these, 80% were said to speak English very well, whereas 20% were said to speak English less than very well. Thus, in contrast to the construction of Latinx students as being English Language Learners, most Latinx students are bilingual and speak English very well. The language practices of U.S. Latinx cannot be understood as English on the one hand, and Spanish and/or an Indigenous language on the other, but in terms of the complex interactions of their multilingualism.

Although the number of speakers of Indigenous languages among U.S. Latinx is difficult to calculate, their numbers are also growing. According to the New York Mexican consulate, 17% of the Mexican population they serve speak an Indigenous language, most likely Mixteco, Náhuatl, Otomí, P’urhépecha, or Trique (Semple, 2014).

Monoglossic Constructions of Language and Bilingualism

Latinx U.S. bilinguals are often perceived as two monolinguals in one (Grosjean, 1982). This has to do with language and bilingualism theories operating as instruments of colonialism, nation-building, and modernity to produce and naturalize forms of social inequality (Bauman & Briggs, 2003). That is, the ideological invention of language by European elites has resulted not only in the imposition of rigid forms of using language that reflect their own, but also in branding those whose language practices are different as intellectually inferior and even irrational.

In his theory of coloniality, Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2000) points out that the exploitation and domination of racialized groups are carried out not solely through labor, but through the structuring of knowledge-systems, race, language, and sex into superior and inferior. The knowledges and ways of languaging of those racialized as inferior are deemed inappropriate for education, producing failure.

What schools describe as two autonomous linguistic systems – English and Spanish – are social constructions, “invented” historically through processes of nation-building and colonization (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Although these named languages are important sociopolitical realities, they have little to do with the languaging of people. All students’ language practices go way beyond those validated in schools. But bilingual languaging is perceived as “mixing,” and understood as a mark of intellectual deficiency.

Bilingualism in U.S. schools has adhered to theories developed for the acquisition of a “second” or “foreign” language by English-speaking monolinguals. Bilingualism is interpreted as the simple addition of two autonomous language systems, what Canadian scholar Wallace Lambert (1974) called “additive bilingualism.” In this model of bilingualism, an L2 (second language) is added to an L1 (first language) and the two languages operate always separately. Usually, the L2 is added in school after the L1 is acquired at home. This additive model of bilingualism is very different from

the bilingualism of the Latinx community in which their bilingual development is not sequential, but simultaneous. The concept of additive bilingualism has been produced through a monoglossic ideology that understands bilingualism only from the perspective of monolingualism as the norm. Bilingualism in this view is simply double monolingualism, with bilingual individuals expected to be and do the same as monolinguals.

Constructions of “English,” Constructions of “Spanish”

The teaching of English has been the focus of Latinx students’ education. Conversely, despite the production of more standards for their education, there have been minimal efforts to engage with the life experiences, epistemologies and language practices of Latinx bilingual students.

English in language education in the U.S. is categorized as “a second language” or “native,” leaving little room for the linguistic performances of Latinx bilinguals. Teachers demand that U.S. Latinx students leave all of themselves behind – historically, culturally, linguistically – when they enter schools.

Although “Spanish” has been commodified in the present neoliberal globalized market, the teaching of Spanish continues to uphold a “monolingual” standard, which does not take into consideration the bilingual practices of U.S. Latinx communities. Latinx practices are often labeled as “Spanglish” (Stavans, 2003), connoting “mixture.”

Dynamic Bilingualism and Translanguaging

The bilingualism of Latinx bilingual students is not simply additive; it is *dynamic*. Latinx bilinguals engage in what scholars have called *translanguaging* (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Fu, Hadjioannou, & Zhou, 2019; García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2011).

Translanguaging theory refers to the actions of multilinguals in leveraging a unitary semiotic repertoire made up of linguistic and multimodal signs that does not correspond to the strict parameters of one named language or another established by institutions. Translanguaging shifts the emphasis to the *actions* of bilingual students and their spontaneous performances, always emergent, as they engage in assemblages of the forms of meaning-making that are available (Pennycook, 2017). Named languages like English and Spanish are important sociopolitical realities, but bilinguals go beyond the constructed boundaries of named languages and the two languages do not simply correspond to two dual cognitive or experiential realities (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015, 2019).

By foregrounding the actions of multilinguals, translanguaging takes into account participants’ simultaneous use of multiple semiotic resources (visuals, gestures, bodily movement) that mutually elaborate each other (Lin, 2019; Moore, Bradley, & Simpson, 2020).

Giving room to translanguaging constructs a legitimate “in-between space,” a *Nepantla* or “tierra entre medio,” which Gloria Anzaldúa describes in her 1987 translingual text *Borderlands/La frontera*. The potential of what Li Wei (2011) calls a “translanguaging space” is captured by Anzaldúa (2002) when she says: “Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, *always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries*” (our italics, p. 1). Translanguaging as actions are always in a state of constant and moment-by-moment unfolding, in emergence (Wei, 2017; Wei & Lin, 2019).

Latinx bilingual students’ translanguaging is an important resource to learn and engage in tasks as readers, writers, and thinkers, but schools rarely acknowledge this capacity. Increasingly, however, educators have explored the potential of leveraging translanguaging to educate Latinx students,¹ but, as we will see in the next section, bilingual Latinx students’ translanguaging has never been considered in U.S. language policy.

Language Policies and the Education of U.S. Latinx

Language education policies for Latinx have focused on trying to make their English fit “native” standards, and their Spanish fit “foreign” standards. It is precisely because the education of U.S. Latinx is framed within a monoglossic ideology that much educational failure occurs.

Restrictive Language Education Policies

Although the U.S. has always been multilingual, English monolingualism has been constructed as the only acceptable language use of its loyal and true citizens. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, this monolingual ideology predominated in schools. English Only was the language of loyal and unadulterated Americans, and U.S. Latinx who spoke Spanish were seen as enemies within our gates. Despite the fact that the Spanish language was spoken by original settlers (Kloss, 1977) and is not only a language of immigrants, its use in schools has always been controversial. There is, however, an elite tradition of teaching Spanish as a foreign language in the United States, focusing on the reading of the literature of Spain, a tradition that was initiated at Harvard in 1813 (García, 1997).

The Spanish taught at Harvard had nothing to do with the practices of Spanish speakers in the Southwest in territories that had been Mexico before the Mexican American War (1846–1848) (Menchaca, 1999). It also had little to do with the Spanish spoken in the colony acquired in 1898, Puerto Rico. The military conquest of the southwest and Puerto Rico was followed by an explicitly restrictionist language policy formation in which Spanish was substituted for English as the official language of school instruction, including in Texas by 1858, in California by 1855, in New Mexico by 1921 (Hernández-Chávez, 1995; García & Sung, 2018), and in Puerto Rico in 1898 (Del Valle, 2003).

During World War I, the teaching of German as a foreign language at the secondary level was substituted by Spanish. But it was Castilian Spanish, the language of the central part, and some parts of the north of Spain, that became the preferred variety to be taught to Anglos, while the Spanish of the conquered southwest territories and the colony was relegated to an inferior position and restricted in all educational endeavors.

Tolerant Language Education Policies

By the mid-20th century, some attention was being paid to societal inequities produced by race and language. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional. In 1964, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act passed by Congress prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Crawford, 2004).

The educational situation of U.S. Latinx around this time was dire. In 1960, 87% of all Puerto Ricans on the mainland aged 25 or older had dropped out from high school, and the dropout rate in grade 8 was 53% (Castellanos, 1983). In the Southwest, the average Chicanc child had only a seventh-grade education. In Texas, the high school dropout rate for Chicanc was 89%. And in California, fewer than 1% of college students at the University of California campuses were Chicanc (Mackey & Beebe, 1977).

Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas sponsored Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1968) – the Bilingual Education Act – with the goal of making U.S. Latinx children fully literate in English (Crawford, 2004). In 1974 when the Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized, the transitional nature of bilingual education was codified into law. Spanish could be used as medium of instruction only until students were said to be English-fluent.

The use of transitional bilingual education in educating those who were said to have “limited English proficiency” was also supported in the *Lau v. Nichols* U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1974. In providing relief to the Chinese plaintiffs, the court ruled that

There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.

In an important judicial case (*Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981), the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for the Southern District of Texas supported the holding of *Lau* that schools must take “appropriate action” when educating emergent bilinguals and that such action must be based on sound educational theory, produce results, and provide adequate resources, including qualified teachers, and appropriate materials, equipment, and facilities.

Restriction Again

Bilingual education during this time was deeply contested. In 1980, President Ronald Reagan echoed Theodore Roosevelt’s English Only ideology when, opposing bilingual education, he said that it was “absolutely wrong and against American concepts” (cited in Crawford, 2004, p. 120).

In the 1990s, the use of Spanish to support the education of Latinx students came under siege. The most effective attack against bilingual education was spearheaded by Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley software millionaire. In 1998, Proposition 227 (California Education Code, Sections 305–306) prohibited bilingual education for Latinx children. In 2000, Arizona approved Proposition 203 (Arizona Revised Statutes 15–751–755) banning bilingual education. In 2002, a proposition in Massachusetts (Question 2, G.L. c. 71A) did the same.

The word *bilingual*, what Crawford (2005) calls “the B-Word,” was progressively silenced during the turn of the century. As we will see, official titles of legislation supporting language-minoritized children’s education and educational programs deleted the word *bilingual* from their names (García, 2006; Hornberger, 2006; Wiley & Wright, 2004).

Restriction Under the Guise of Enrichment

In 2002, the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) was repealed. The new *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation substituted the Bilingual Education Act for Title III of NCLB (Public Law 107–110) now titled “Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students.” NCLB forced schools to pay attention to Latinx students’ education. But the emphasis on assessment strictly in English only produced the failure of many more U.S. Latinx students (Crawford, 2004; García & Kleifgen, 2018; Hornberger, 2006; Wiley & Wright, 2004). The poor performance of bilingual Latinx on monolingual assessments led to many more placed in segregated compensatory programs, focused on “remediating” their language.

As the accountability system of NCLB was put into effect, “dual language” or “dual immersion” – a type of bilingual education – started to make inroads nationally. It purposefully did not name itself bilingual, separating itself from Latinx’s struggles for educational equity that were the impetus for bilingual education efforts. Lindholm-Leary (2001) explains that in dual-language programs, unlike other English immersion or bilingual programs:

English-dominant and target-language-dominant students are purposefully integrated with the goals of developing bilingual skills, academic excellence, and positive cross-cultural and personal competency attitudes for both groups of students.

(p. 30)

Modeled after Canadian immersion programs, dual-language education is geared towards language majority students and the teaching of two languages.

The reframing of bilingual education to benefit language majority students subverts the original intentions of 1960s Latinx activists who viewed bilingual education as specifically attending to the needs of linguistically minoritized youth and communities. With an ideology of neoliberal marketization of language and culture, dual-language programs remove the historical contexts and struggles within which bilingual education programs were originally offered (García & Sung, 2018). As Pimentel (2011) reiterates, in many of these dual-language programs Latinx students become “commodities that can be consumed by White, English-speaking students” (p. 351).

Although two-way dual-language programs are gaining in popularity throughout the country, many scholars have decried the abandonment of an equitable education goal for language minoritized students and the increased focus on bilingualism for neoliberal economic interests and global human capital.² In many Latinx communities, dual-language programs are educating primarily Latinx students whose bilingualism falls along all points of a continuum. Unfortunately, some of these bilingual programs have also adopted the monoglossic ideology of two-way dual-language programs.

Criminalizing Bilingualism; Profiting From Bilingualism

In 2015, NCLB was substituted by *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015). The new legislation loosened accountability restrictions but retained the emphasis on assessments in English only.

More than ever, Latinx’ bilingualism was marginalized with the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016. President Trump’s references to Latinx people as “rapists,” “criminals,” and “killers” ushered in an era in which Spanish speaking and bilingualism have become “dangerous” (Fermoso, 2018). These language practices are, after all, those of the “masses of illegal aliens and giant caravans” that caused the Trump-declared “national emergency.”³ Bilingualism is criminalized when it pertains to minoritized Latinxs, whereas for dominant White students, bilingualism is considered beneficial and promoted through the emergence of dual-language programs.

It is precisely this attention to bilingualism as an economic resource that fueled the reversals of bilingual education restrictions in California in 2016 (Proposition 58) and Massachusetts in 2017.

Co-constitution of Monoglossic Ideologies and Raciolinguistic Ideologies

Monoglossic ideologies continue to control the curriculum and pedagogical practices for Latinx students, even when schools have developed dual-language bilingual programs. Flores and Rosa (2015), and Rosa and Flores (2017) have argued that it is not language itself but the social categories of being non-White, bilingual, non-native, immigrant that produce the *perception* of signs that are in turn evaluated by what they call “*the white listening subject*.” They maintain that “No language variety is objectively distinctive or nondistinctive, but rather comes to be enregistered as such in particular historical, political and economic circumstances” (p. 632).

Flores (1/20/2020, e-mail communication) reminds us that the work on raciolinguistic ideologies presents an analytical shift away from traditional work on sociolinguistics, which has sought to document the purported systematicity of the language practices of minoritized speakers. For example, studying the bilingualism of Latinx communities, many sociolinguists describe their practices as code switching, going from one language to another (Poplack, 1980; MacSwan, 1999). Doing so, they focus on what they call “the structural constraints” of code switching, attempting to make the bilingual behavior systematic, grammatical and logical. Despite the well-meaning efforts of these sociolinguists, this framing of code switching does not accept the moment-by-moment unfolding of

language-making in which bilinguals engage in meaning-making through translanguaging. In many ways, code switching acts just like additive bilingualism; it promotes a view of the two languages and bilingual use as simply a double monolingualism. This is the view held by MacSwan (2017) and refuted by Otheguy et al. (2019) as they position translanguaging as a unitary repertoire.

Many educators and scholars refuse to accept the legitimacy of Latinx racialized bilinguals' epistemologies, knowledge-production, and language systems. Although the heteroglossia of language (Bakhtin, 1981) is accepted by most scholars, the language of minoritized bilinguals in schools continues to be seen through monoglossic ideologies. The question then is why educators engage in this act of refusal. Flores and Rosa (2015) propose that since race and language are co-constituted, the White listening subject refuses to acknowledge this different reality so as to racialize and minoritize the community further.

To accept translanguaging in education is, as Flores (2014) has said, a political act, an act of legitimizing bilingual practices, starting to listen, and using "a new common sense" as the decolonial theorist Boaventura de Sousa Santos has proposed (2014, 2018). This new common sense, this "otherwise" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), makes other knowledges visible, delinking knowledge from the colonial matrix of power in which language in schools continues to operate today.

Only when educators enter this "otherwise" space of knowledge will they be able to listen to Latinx translanguaging without evaluating it against language as constructed and defined by the colonial matrix of power. It might be impossible for the U.S. to shed its monoglossic education policies. But it is possible for educators to shed their monoglossic ideologies, opening up new paths to educate U.S. Latinx without the shackles of the constructed named languages to which they have been subjected.⁴

Conclusion

U.S. Latinx students are often seen as a linguistic "problem." U.S. schools do not engage students in reflection about the construction of language and bilingualism and the monoglossic ideologies enacted through language education policies. As such, U.S. Latinx are made to feel that their language is always inappropriate. Given this paradigm, educational failure is sure to follow.

To reverse this trend in U.S. education teachers would need to develop what García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) have called a "juntos" stance, a belief in liberating the network of meanings with which bilingual students act from the strictures of what is accepted in schools as "language." Only then, will be able to see Latinx students in their fullness – their histories, dreams, poems, stories, and courageous struggles against injustice and racism.

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Notes

1. See, for example, De los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017; García, 2009; García et al., 2017; García & Kleyn, 2016; García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017; Gort & Sembiente, 2015; Martínez, Hikida, & Durán, 2019; Sánchez & García, forthcoming.
2. See Cervantes-Soon (2014); Flores (2013, 2017); Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, and Henderson (2014); Valdés (1997); Varghese and Park (2010) for extensive research on this.
3. Remarks made by President Trump regarding the immigration crisis on November 1, 2018.
4. To understand what teachers must know and be able to do, see García et al., 2017.

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