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For the final version, see the French translation.*

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE
PLANNING AND
TRANSETHNIFICATION
IN THE USA¹**

By **Richard Ruiz**, Professor, University of Arizona, USA,
ruizr@email.arizona.edu

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Abstract: The primary thesis presented here is that language planning in the USA is carried out within a general vision of transesthnification, a process by which minority groups are expected to subordinate their language and culture to a larger sense of “being American.” Transesthnification therefore differs from classic assimilation in that ethnic groups do not have to abandon completely their cultural identities in order to be integrated into the nation- state; what is necessary is that their political allegiance must be transferred completely to the multinational state, even while their local cultural and language practices retain a semblance of authenticity. In fact, such local practices are seen as contributing to the strength of the nation-state, so long as they do not reflect a competing political identity.

While language planning as an activity of societies and individuals is perhaps as old as language itself, language planning as a professional field of work and systematic study did not establish itself until the mid-1900s (see the discussion in Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, esp. pp. ix and following). The initial purposes of pioneers in language planning, perhaps most easily exemplified by the work included in early volumes such as *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (Fishman et al., 1968) and *Can Language Be Planned?* (Rubin & Jernudd, 1971), centered primarily on solving specific “language problems” that coincided with the development of new nations emerging out of decades, sometimes centuries, of colonialism (cf Tollefson 2002); in spite of the titles of these volumes, it was clear from the outset that the issues involved were not merely linguistic, but had much broader societal implications. Thus, the field quickly was populated and informed by researchers from a wide variety of disciplines besides language and linguistics, including anthropology (Heath, 1972), economics (Coulmas, 1992; Jernudd, 1971), education (Andersson & Boyer, 1970; John-Steiner, 1971), law (Leibowitz, 1969; Turi, 1977), political science (Kelman, 1969 [1971]; Pool, 1972; Weinstein, 1983), psychology (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Macnamara, 1971), and sociology (Lieberson, 1971). Research and publication has persisted and expanded in all of these areas up to the present. Language planning therefore has become a vast multidisciplinary field that potentially touches on all dimensions of public life, as demonstrated by the following short list of some of the activities and concerns of language planners:

¹ Portions of this paper have been read as early as 1986 at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco and as recently as the 2nd International Congress of Applied Linguistics in Costa Rica in 2009. I wish to acknowledge helpful comments and conversations with Brendan O’Connor, Janelle Johnson, Leila Varley Gutierrez and the members of the Language Planning seminars at the University of Arizona.

- Literacy campaigns
- Media of various sorts
- Language and economic opportunities (the “linguistic marketplace”)
- The social and political status of language minority communities
- Language maintenance, shift, and revitalization
- Orthographic development and spelling reform
- Production of Dictionaries, grammars, and style manuals
- Medium of instruction policies in schools
- Language policy development
- Language rights
- Court Interpretation
- Terminological elaboration
- The language of technology
- Language standardization
- Preparation of teachers
- Bilingual and foreign language education
- Language and cultural identity
- Language and political integration
- Language officialization

It is evident from this brief list that language planning reaches far and wide into the public life of a society. In short, language planning is, as many writers have noted, social planning. It is therefore important to keep in mind this larger social context as we try to understand the role of languages in it. In this regard, Spolsky’s (2004) advice is useful; he warns against a “linguicism,” an approach to the study of language and language policy that ignores the larger social forces at play: “...language policy exists within a complex set of social, political, economic, religious, demographic, educational and cultural factors that make up the full ecology of human life...language and language policy need to be looked at in the widest context and not treated as a closed universe. Language is a central factor, but linguicism...imposes limited vision.” (Spolsky, 2004, pp. ix-x).

The development of language planning as a discipline corresponds roughly to that of the broader field of sociolinguistics, and specifically the sub-field of the politics of language. Even after a half-century of elaboration, there are still a number of important, even basic questions to be pursued. In this article my purpose is to discuss a few of these with the hope of clarifying how the field of language planning can help us understand some of our most important issues.

The focus of this brief article is language planning in the US, but this cannot be easily divorced from developments elsewhere. A number of publications have contained much more complete discussions of these topics than I can possibly include in this small space; among the most recent of these are Gándara & Hopkins (2010) and Menken & García (2010). Both of these books concern how language planning and policy affects schools; the former deals exclusively with developments in the US, especially in a few key states, and the latter examines the issue internationally. The controversies inherent in the intersection of language and society have been exacerbated recently with demographic changes and political developments in the United States. My specific interest is to try to explain why these conflicts have surfaced now; I will concentrate on questions of political identity and integration by looking at English officialization movements in the US.

■ LANGUAGE PLANNING AND TRANSETHNIFICATION

Movements toward the officialization of English in the United States are consistent with the tendency in large multinational states to promote a transesthnified public culture that requires political allegiance to the administrative nation-state; further, it expects that allegiance to be demonstrated in at least a few of the major

dimensions of public life (language behavior being one such dimension).² In Fishman's (1968) terms, the self interest of states impel them to act to ensure their preservation by promoting "nationism" over "nationalism" and instrumental over sentimental attachments to the political system (Kelman, 1969).

Fishman's early distinction between "nationalism" and "nationism" is still useful, especially as we try to understand the role that language plays in these dynamics. His purpose was to illuminate the complex situations in which ethnic-language groups ("nationalities") find themselves within larger nation-states ("nations")³. His analysis makes clear that characterizing all cases of nation-building with one term ("nationalism") is not only simplistic but misleading. The process by which ethnic groups become a nationality is very different from that undergone by various nationalities gaining an identity-attachment to the nation-state, yet we refer to these processes by the same term.⁴ "Nationalism" ultimately emphasizes local, ethnic attachments; it can stand quite apart and opposed to the ethos of the state, it can be in substantial if not complete alignment with it (Edwards' "nation-state"), or, as we shall explore presently, it can be seen somewhere in between. It is important, however, not to minimize the importance that such local ethnic attachments play in identity. So, in the US, one might see oneself as Navajo or African American or Chicano first; when language becomes a factor in these attachments, then it is seen as another mechanism for the development and elaboration of identity. The challenge of nationalism for the state, then, is to devise strategies whereby these groups start to move their allegiance toward it.

One possible avenue for such a move is for the state to hold out to its citizens a *quid pro quo*—allegiance and commitment to its values and practices in exchange for a piece of the pie, whether that is economic reward in the form of access to education and jobs, social status in the form of official recognition, or some combination of sanctions. Such an arrangement promotes the view that the goods that the state can provide are at least as satisfying as those that can be gained by the sentimental relationships of the local clan. Eventually, after a few generations of cultivating such an instrumental arrangement, the state may begin to attract some of the sentimentality traditionally reserved for the clan, and therefore start a migration into the larger social circle that erodes ethnic group solidarity. This adaptation of Kelman's view of the relation of ethnicities to the state is similar to the idea of "civic nationalism" proposed by Smith (2007) and contested by Edwards (2009). See, also, Conversi's (2007) discussion of instrumentalism and its relation to ethnic attachments. Below I suggest ways in which states proceed to create ethnic allegiance; my discussion is not incompatible substantively with the ideas of Smith and Kelman as I understand them, rather my purpose is to understand the processes involved in their realization.

² This tendency most often works to the detriment of "small" languages in relation to more powerful ones. See the opening remarks of the Director of the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia at an international conference on language promotion in Europe and Russia: "...the predominance of the traditional nation-states means that the official languages of these states come to dominate and that the languages of stateless nations are endangered by the *weak* protection they receive. This is even worse in the case of multinational and plurilingual states, which nevertheless rank their languages in a hierarchy and only make one of them the official language of the state on the grounds that it is the majority language demographically or for reasons of power" Colomines, 2005, p. 207. Similar statements can be found throughout the language planning literature; see the papers in Maurais and Morris (2004) and Brock-Utne and Hopson (2005) for some recent examples.

³ There is, as always, considerable argument and contestation of terms in this area. See, for example, Edwards' (2009) review of nationalism and its relation to ethnicity. He is especially critical of the term "nation-state" when it is used as a synonym for "country" or merely "state." Nation, for him, is "a subjective or 'imagined' community in Anderson's sense," while the state is an administrative unit attached to a territory (2009, p. 171ff); the term "nation-state" would require that these two constructs be coterminous, which they almost never are. What Edwards calls "nation," Fishman calls "nationality," and the state in Edwards' lexicon would be Fishman's "nation." I am not for the moment ready to argue against Edwards; for our purposes here, Fishman is making the same distinction with different terms, and so we will see where that leads.

⁴ Historical examples of civic identity-convergence between different ethnic groups abound. One might see a similar pattern of political convergence between Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and some Central American immigrant groups into "Latinos" as a political entity. While this term (as well as Hispanic) is contested with considerable justification, it can also function as a way to concentrate political interests.

The attempt to erode ethnic ties is not necessary to preserve the state, as Smith (2007) and a number of others contend; large states could tolerate, perhaps even encourage, local ethnic attachments and cultural pluralism and remain not only viable but vibrant. Smith envisions “a civic ideal of nationhood...predicated on the union of nation and state, and on a political type of nationalism...” (p. 325). But the rule, established and reinforced over many centuries of insensitivity toward the needs of small ethnic communities, is broken in only a few instances—and there are still significant doubts that the modern exceptions will have much long-term success (see, as an example, the short-term official status for Australian aboriginal languages embodied in the National Policy on Languages [LoBianco, 1987] confronted shortly thereafter by a new government intent on giving priority to English and the powerful Asian languages [Dawkins, 1991]).

Transethnification can be described as follows: in the hierarchy of allegiances that characterizes identification (everyone has multiple identities, and these compete for priority by circumstance), individuals and communities are transethnified when local (ethnic) attachments are subordinated (if not suppressed in relation) to national ones. The iconography of these attachments may be largely codified in political values—individualistic capitalism, democracy, and the various freedoms of the Bill of Rights are examples from the United States. Transethnification allows the possibility that one will “fight for one’s country” (actually or symbolically) even in the face of an egregious history of oppression by that country. The fact that African Americans continue to distinguish themselves in US military service is understandable given their allegiance to the state (or its ideal). But it is also important to note that African Americans, along with other minority groups, tend to be over-represented in the US military relative to their percentage of the population. Members of these groups continue to distinguish themselves in military service and in their patriotic commitment toward a society that still, even in the so-called “post-racial” period with a Black President, does not know how to acknowledge this loyalty, much less how to compensate them as they deserve. Some of these are in service to a country to which they have not yet gained citizenship.

Such apparently anomalous attitudes are not unknown in other parts of the Americas, as well. In the face of great injustice toward indigenous groups in Mexico and Guatemala and Peru and Bolivia, one still sees evidence of the loyalty, even love, of native groups for their beloved countries: school children in Chiapas stand outside every morning before class to salute the flag and sing the national hymn with great enthusiasm; crowds in Santa Cruz and Chichicastenango and Lima and hundreds of other communities march and dance in celebration of their independence days or because their national team has beat the US in soccer.

What all of these cases demonstrate is a strong and pervasive ethic in a country, as imperfect as it has been, that demands allegiance to its central ideals, and for the most part receives it from even those who would be more than justified in rejecting it. But such loyalty is not evidence that they do not also cherish their own cultural distinctiveness; this also is important to them. But they have appropriated, through their own initiative or through imposition, a political identity that affirms their connection to their homeland. We cannot deny, however, that there are also other cases, in these and other times, in which these loyalties are in conflict; occasional disruptions of such public allegiance (e.g. the Los Angeles riots in the 1960s and 1990s) are significant as evidence that such public/private identity formations are delicate, but they nevertheless stand in sharp contrast to the actions of minority communities in other states (e.g. pre-Mandela South Africa) where acts of public disobedience are a constant reminder of the political fragmentation of civil authority where transethnification has not been realized. What we can say is that states can create conditions under which ethnic attachments and allegiance to the state can co-exist.

One should ask what differentiates transethnification from classical definitions of assimilation. The main difference is that, in transethnification, it is not necessary to “lose” one’s ethnicity to be useful to the state. Local attachments are not only permissible, but entirely desirable, so long as they have a certain aspect that qualifies them for acceptance in the public culture. Nor is it necessary, as it is in the full assimilation described by Gordon (1964), that one’s attachment to the state have any “sentimental” aspect (in Kelman’s sense of historicity and authenticity). It is minimally sufficient that one’s public actions convey acceptance of the legitimacy of the state and its ideals, even though these are not always (or even often) realized. The hope is that such public displays of allegiance will be convincing to our enemies that the union is strong, and to the

younger generations of minority children that their successful futures lie in giving in to the majoritarian ethos. I propose the following propositions as a way to explain the case of the USA; whether they apply to other cases will be left for another time.

- (1) To the extent we value cultural differences, we tolerate “cultural diversity” rather than “cultural pluralism.”
- (2) To the extent that we value cultural pluralism, we tolerate it as a private rather than a public pluralism.
- (3) To the extent that we tolerate a public pluralism, it is symbolic and ceremonial rather than personal and political.

I will explain these in order.

The Priority of Diversity Over Pluralism

Proposition (1) contains a distinction between diversity and pluralism. Simply stated, I suggest it as a distinction between individual (though not idiosyncratic) and group differences. These appear to be practically if not conceptually indistinct ideas, and they are used interchangeably by many writers. When Sonia Nieto (2004), for example, speaks of “affirming diversity,” or when Eugene Garcia (1995) asks that we consider how we might meet “the challenge of cultural and linguistic diversity” in our schools, they are really talking about pluralism as I use the terms. Diversity is exemplified by the Mexican (from Mexico) or Chinese (from China) or Portuguese (from Portugal) student who sits in classrooms like the one I visited in Chicago. They have all been in school in their countries, and none knows English at all; but their parents, students at the university, want them there to learn it. They pose a challenge in approach and technology. About such students we ask, “¿how can I teach them, given that they don’t understand me?” This is a technical problem, resolved relatively quickly, with the solicited aid of their parents, who will likely go back in a few years to Mexico or China or Portugal. The families live among us for a while, perhaps in ethnically separate communities, perhaps not; it would not be surprising to see them living and shopping in the same neighborhood with their child’s teacher. We think of them as interesting and enriching (if complicating) additions to our classroom and school. To the extent that they represent anything beyond themselves, they are at most reluctant ambassadors of far-off lands (this is what I meant when I said that they are individuals, but not idiosyncratic); if we ask them to contribute something of their culture to the experiences of the other students, it is because we value the foreign *qua* foreign as academically enriching, but not because our goal is somehow to appropriate the foreign in school or society. We often go beyond merely appreciating this sort of cultural difference, to the point of seeking it out and cultivating it (in foreign exchanges and the adoption of sister cities, for example). Such differences are never the object of proselytization; in these circumstances, it would be a shame to detract from the exoticism of this kind of “other.”

This is safe cultural difference: encouraging, even affirming “diversity” of this sort makes us feel somehow as if we are doing something to advance peace in the world through understanding and good will; at the very least we are giving our children one more useful experience. We have no qualms about tapping into their prior knowledge, that rich storehouse of cultural and linguistic wealth we never doubt they bring with them. I suspect that many of the strategies we have developed for teaching English language learners have been significantly informed by these students; some of our innovations in teaching may have even started with them in mind.

This is hardly the situation facing Juan José in South Tucson, Arizona. His family has lived in this neighborhood for generations. His parents speak Spanish to him, as do many of his friends and family. He is bilingual, although he has some trouble reading and writing in English. His teacher drives ten miles from across the river to the school every day. She would like to have more contact with “JJ’s” parents, but they speak little English, and they hardly ever come to the school. His teacher, along with many of the teachers and administrators of the school, are sympathetic, but they are frustrated with his lack of progress. They express concerns about the neighborhood and his non-English environment, and in their candid moments decry the existence of the barrio as the real obstacle to achievement for these kids. This is not the sort of

cultural difference to be encouraged and invited into the classroom, even for the sake of ceremony or “cultural appreciation”; it is risky to try to domesticate this sort of “otherness.” It is, instead, to be ignored, at best, perhaps even rooted out so that these kids can get ahead.

Juan José is not an individual cultural actor. He is a representative of his community, past and future; he is the same child who has walked into our classrooms for generations, and will continue doing so into the indefinite future. Even though they are among us, these families are still considered aliens and foreigners. Galindo and Vijil (2004) call this a “Latino-as-foreigner phenomenon in which long-term residents and recent immigrants are perceived as foreigners” (p. 38). This form of nativism is more virulent than that which affected earlier European immigrant groups because Latinos are more easily identifiable as different through skin color and language. They are a persistent problem. The best we expect is to rescue one of them, and thus validate the schooling that we have provided, the only kind we know. The question we ask of Juan José is, “¿how quickly can we get him away from his community so that he can achieve?” Further, we ask, “¿If we teach him in Spanish so that he can understand, will we not be promoting the ghettoization that is the cause of his disadvantage?”

Juan José is not an individual; he is a token, a representative of his community. His “problems” are not his uniquely: they are a demonstration of what ails his community. His disadvantage is existential, not circumstantial. He is not an “immigrant” who will leave us soon so we can be done with his problem, which will never leave us. Tomorrow or next year, his little brother or cousin will come into our classroom as he did, and whatever minimal progress we saw in Juan José will be a distant memory: we will start again at zero, because that is all we think these children bring with them. This is how we conceptualize the problems of pluralism, as opposed to the advantages of diversity.

The Priority of Private Over Public

The second proposition is an acknowledgement that we do not like cultural pluralism, but that there may be times and circumstances in which we have to tolerate and cope with it. If we have to have it, it should be restricted to the private domains of family and community. Although there are some who would deny ethnic communities the right to identify themselves and raise their children as they would like, these are often rebuked as extremists or anti-immigrant (a label which itself distorts the debate, since quite often immigrant status is not involved). But when common, public resources are involved, the resistance to the promotion of programs of ethnic identification becomes broad based and more easily voiced. This is the reason that bilingual education, to the extent that it is regarded as a program that encourages ethnic identifications, is resisted with such hostility. If it is in public schools, it is using public money to subsidize what is regarded as essentially a private matter. This is also a rationale for including bilingual education, bilingual ballots and other aspects of public life as targets for elimination in official English legislation.

Although a number of states, including Colorado, Massachusetts, and Florida, have recently considered measures some might call anti-immigrant, Arizona has been by far the most visible. Since 2000, the legislature and the electorate have passed laws in several versions against bilingual education, amendments to the constitution making English the official language of the state (Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2009), and restrictions against public financing of English classes for illegal aliens. Most recently, the State Superintendent of Schools in Arizona has launched a campaign and promoted legislation for the purpose of eliminating public funds for courses in ethnic studies in the state’s second largest school district. House Bill 2281 prohibits public school classes that “promote the overthrow of the United States government, ...promote resentment toward a race or class of people, ...are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group, [and] ...advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.” The bill allows the Superintendent to decide whether a public school is in compliance with the law, and to lower financial sanctions if it is not (State of Arizona, House of Representatives, 2010). He has also declared his intention to enforce a rule that principals should terminate teachers who speak English with an accent (Jordan, 2010). While one might argue that no one speaks any language without an accent, this particular measure is widely perceived to reflect a pervasive anti-Hispanic attitude in official state agencies, especially in the Department of

Education. These are all instances of a pervasive atmosphere in Arizona and increasingly in other states; it views any public accommodation of ethnicity and languages other than English as a promotion of ethnic nationalism and prejudice instead of commitment to an idealized general will; publically-funded ethnic studies programs are anti-American and “promote ethnic chauvinism.”

It is noteworthy that the legislation and regulations in question are aimed at public (including charter) schools. There appears to be little concern about heritage language schools and other efforts to maintain language and culture, as long as they are privately-financed.

The Priority of Symbolic Over Committed Ethnicity

Finally, the third proposition accepts the possibility that a public cultural pluralism may be acceptable, and even valuable for the public good, but only if it represents an occasional, tip-of-the-hat acknowledgment of ethnic heritages and works to advance the cultural and economic interests of the greater community. Publicly subsidized displays of ethnic identification may be especially valuable in the economic and artistic life of the dominant community. The fact that in Chicago “everyone is Irish” on March 17, and that a wide variety of people in Tucson celebrate Cinco de Mayo (even if they are not sure what it means) suggests that symbolic and ceremonial public ethnicity is valuable to dominant communities, as well as to the state.

The value of language diversity is not lost on the economic community. To the extent that it can take advantage of a bilingual workforce, the economic sector promotes ethnic communities. What would Boston’s North End be without “authentic” Italian restaurants and businesses, staffed by real Italian-Americans? Would San Francisco be the same without Chinatown? What is the economic impact of Olvera Street in Los Angeles? Would Miami be as charming without Little Havana? Can Tucson survive economically without the restaurants on South Sixth Street and the Mariachi Festival? These are questions that can be repeated for countless cities and towns throughout the country. Similarly, large corporations understand that ethnic communities that have retained language and culture can be real assets. Executives from such companies as CitiBank, Sears, and Afni sound like multiculturalists when speaking on these issues: “This is becoming a bilingual nation, with Spanish speaking people now accounting for 10 to 15 percent of the population and growing. It’s an important part of our culture and who we are as Americans. So, it’s important to us, because to speak in someone’s native tongue is the definition of customer service” (Moore, 2006). Cultural diversity and language proficiencies are good when they are good for capitalism.

In addition to their usefulness, these are also nice, safe expressions of cultural difference. They become problematic, however, if they lead people within ethnic communities to rejuvenate their commitments to social justice—if these become the icons that index the history of oppression and discrimination that has characterized the dominant and the subaltern in North America. This would be a retrogression to nationalism, whereas transethnification is conceived of as a progressive step to the future that accommodates the needs of the administrative state (cf Roosens’ [1989] discussion on “ethnogenesis”).

■ CONCLUSION

This analysis leads to the conclusion that languages other than English (LOTEs) are perfectly acceptable in US society as long as they are mediated through individuals and not communities; if they are community languages, they should be confined to the private sector and not make demands for public subsidy; if there is to be public subsidy, their use should be for the common public good, and not signal competing allegiances.

This last proposition suggests the critical role that instrumentalism plays in our language ideology. As mentioned above, Herbert Kelman (1971) contrasted different modes of identifying with the national system by distinguishing “sentimental” and “instrumental” attachments. He describes the distinction as follows.

An individual is sentimentally attached to the national system to the extent that he sees it as representing him—as being, in some central way, a reflection and an extension of himself. The system is legitimate and deserving of his loyalty because it is

the embodiment of a people in which his personal identity is anchored....An individual is instrumentally attached to the national system to the extent that he sees it as an effective vehicle for achieving his own ends and the ends of members of other systems. For the instrumentally attached, the system is legitimate and deserving of his loyalty because it provides the organization for a smoothly running society, in which individuals can participate to their mutual benefit and have some assurance that their needs will be met. (Kelman, 1971, p. 25)

The instrumental orientation serves the interests of transethnification in several ways. In general, it urges us beyond local to system-wide and global considerations. We might perhaps say that attending to the usefulness of things beyond our community makes those things better in the long run because, by nullifying our incapacitating sentimentalities, we encourage the progress that is the result of a free market of goods and ideas. While we recognize the conservative call to “buy American” as a competing tendency, the value placed on open competition in the marketplace is still dominant (Conservative Pat Buchanan drove a Mercedes Benz during his “America First” 1992 presidential campaign). More specifically with respect to ethnicity and language, we perceive a sort of hierarchical stratification of languages in society where some are better because they are more useful, some are small and invalid because there is little return for the investment of learning and using them. This is the image of a sociolinguistic darwinism that ensures the perpetuation of strong (Trudgill [1991] calls them “killer”) languages, the languages of wider communication (LWCs), often at the expense of the weak. This results in relative indifference on the part of LWC speakers in the face of massive and rapid loss of the “little” languages. After all, while languages might be lost, it is primarily because they have been replaced with something else; when the “something else” is a LWC, this may be cause for celebration not dismay, since the new that has come is much more useful to these speakers. Indeed, we should wonder whether “little” language communities do not more often encourage their own demise if the reward is gaining the advantages of a more powerful language (Edwards, 1984).

The prior discussion on ethnicity and transethnification needs to be more directly tied to language if we are to understand the movement to officialize English in the US. Language is historically (if not conceptually) tied to national origin in the US. The idea of “a nation of immigrants” is a nineteenth century image of non-English-speaking European ethnicities—Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Norwegians, Germans—all whose collective names as a people are the same as the names of their languages. More recently, Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, and the Hmong have also brought with them ethnicities not easily divorced in our minds from their languages. Language is therefore one of those “major dimensions of public life” mentioned above. Change in language behavior is demonstrable, and it serves to index change in identity, or at least in loyalty: the transfer of allegiance from old country to new is signaled most visibly by the switch from the ethnic language to English. The switch from speaking Italian to speaking English is the switch from *being* Italian to *being* American (or from being Italian to being Italian-American to being “just American”).

The tendency to tie language to nation and to insist on allegiance to a dominant language ideology is not new, nor is it confined to the US. Mackey’s (2004, p. 68) contention that “subsuming all sister languages under a politically dominant tongue has long been the practice of nation-states” is well-documented. Similarly, Schlyter (2004) cites the influence of the Soviet and western traditions on Central Asian policy makers in “making language one of the main components in definitions of ethnicity and nation...” (p. 166). This is also the predominant ideology in the US, although it could be otherwise, as Morris (2004) suggests:

A linguistically diverse USA, in which the large Spanish-speaking minority would be regarded as an asset, would likely be much more supportive of a linguistically diverse North America. On the other hand, powerful forces within the USA regard monolingualism and cultural homogeneity as essential for national unity, and ascendancy of these forces within the country would likely exert powerful pressure on other North American partners to join the Anglophone bandwagon (p. 155).

The movement to officialize English in the United States must seem quite strange to outside observers. While states such as Arizona pass laws in order to “preserve, protect and enhance the role of English,” a large part of the language planning activities of many countries is dedicated to protecting its own languages from the encroachment of English, even while they understand the need for their citizens to acquire it. The US has no official language as a nation, yet the overwhelming power of English seems to have convinced many of its citizens that it can live as if it does. In a world where multilingualism is the norm, such isolationism can be a

risky gamble. In an extraordinary passage on the sociology of English, under the equally extraordinary heading of “The Parochialism of World Languages,” Fishman sounded an early alarm:

The very factors that we have found to foster the international and intranational use and spread of English—economic relations with the Anglophone world, social status (whether reflected via income or education), and interaction with modern technology and mass media—also tend to insulate most Anglophones from learning the languages and cultures of other peoples of the world, precisely because of Anglophone predominance in these crucial respects. The parochialism engendered by such insulation is ultimately deleterious in technology, science, and industry per se and may erode the very superiority that leads the world to English today, thereby leading it to turn to other superior languages tomorrow. Only if the massive worldwide efforts to learn more English are increasingly matched by Anglophone efforts to learn a bit more of the languages (and values, traditions, purposes, etc.) of the rest of the world, might the current extraordinary position of English as an additional language be any more firmly established than were those of the previous *lingua franca*s of world history. In an increasingly interacting world, the acceptance of English may be increasingly related to the acceptance of others by native speakers of English. Unfortunately, we know far more about how to help the world learn English (little though that may be), than we do about how to help native speakers of English learn about the world.” (Fishman, 1977, p. 334-5)

Fishman’s insight should be the centerpiece for language planning and policy development in the United States. It points us to a society where everyone gains the perspective of another’s language, another’s culture. Instead of running away from our natural multilingual communities, we should embrace them for the resources they are, and ask them to help us enter the new millennium. Instead, we have yielded the ground to those with a “persistent aversion to...multiculturalism...who have seen legendary political unifications or those under way as a kind of gilded cage.” (Colomines, 2005, p. 211). Without a complete confession and renunciation of the sin of inveterate and aggressive and oppressive monolingualism, the US runs the risk of losing all of the advantages it has gained for itself and the world. Unfortunately, no such development appears close; quite the contrary.

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