



# Producing change and stability: A scalar analysis of Paraguayan bilingual education policy implementation<sup>☆</sup>



Katherine S. Mortimer\*

*Bilingual Education, Literacy/Biliteracy, and Sociocultural Studies, University of Texas at El Paso, 500 West University Avenue, College of Education, Room 600, El Paso, TX 79912, USA*

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Available online 26 September 2015

### Keywords:

Scale  
Educational language policy  
Appropriation

## ABSTRACT

Research on educational language policy has faced the perennial question of how to conceptualize and analyze the relationships between what are often seen as macro-level policy and micro-level practices. Recent work on social identification and language in globalization demonstrates, however, that analysis of complex social phenomena requires attention to multiple and heterogeneous scales of time and space (Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013; Wortham, 2006). Drawing on this work, this paper uses the notion of scales to examine how both change and stability were produced in the appropriation of a national policy to incorporate Guaraní into instruction in Paraguay. The analysis shows how the policy was appropriated in ways that left rural, Guaraní-dominant children marginalized while benefitting urban, Spanish-dominant children. The scalar frame is productive not only for explaining patterns of appropriation and policy effect, but also in pointing to ways that we might make policy more effectively support language minoritized students.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## Guaraní is everywhere now

“Teenagers speak Guaraní<sup>1</sup> without a care. It’s even on TV. It’s everywhere now” (Sr. Hugo, storeowner, Capitán Antón,<sup>2</sup> Paraguay, 7/29/2008). Once, many adults remembered, children had been cautioned not to speak Guaraní in public. And now, almost a decade and a half after its introduction in schools, Guaraní was everywhere. Many attributed the change they perceived to a change in educational language policy. They credited the 1994 policy requiring Spanish/Guaraní bilingual education for all with a transformation in people’s use and evaluation of the long minoritized language. It is the kind of policy-practice connection that educational language policy (ELP) scholarship strives to document and explain—why and how policies do or do not create change. A principal concern for ELP research, this question is vital in the struggle to achieve educational equity for language minoritized students. We cannot know how policy can be used effectively to include marginalized students where they have been excluded if we do not understand how policy leads to change—or does not.

Yet, the relationship between policy and practice is, of course, far more complex than folk ideologies would represent it, and ELP scholarship has been engaged in the effort to conceptualize and analyze the relationships between what are often

<sup>☆</sup> This article is part of the special issue on Scalar Approaches to Language Learning and Teaching edited by Peter De Costa and Suresh Canagarajah.

\* Tel.: +1 9157475966.

E-mail address: [ksmortimer@utep.edu](mailto:ksmortimer@utep.edu)

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced with stress on the final syllable, written in Spanish as Guaraní. Following Guaraní orthography, I do not use the diacritic.

<sup>2</sup> All names of people, communities, and schools are pseudonyms.

seen as macro-level policies and micro-level practices (Johnson, 2009a, 2011). We know that policy implementation is not a simple, linear process of transmission from “top” to “bottom.” Recent work shows how individual educators working at school and classroom, even interactional, micro levels do much to shape ELP as they practice it, often in ways unpredictable from policy text alone (Hornberger, 1996, 2005; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Menken & Garcia, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Such work has refocused the ELP research lens on “the bottom” and on the multitude of actors and factors that must be considered when trying to understand why a particular ELP takes shape as it does. It gives us a rich understanding of the diversity and contingency of appropriation: language policy actors make diverse and unexpected senses of policy as they take it into their contexts. But what hope do we have of using policy to better support linguistic minority students’ learning if the senses made of it seem entirely without order? Ensuring that ELP serves more as an instrument of empowerment and less as an instrument of power (Johnson, 2013) requires a sufficient understanding of *how* these meanings get made.

Here ELP scholarship benefits from advances in our understanding of various sociolinguistic phenomena in which questions of meaning making amidst unprecedented movement and diversity are paramount. Such work analyzes flows of information and communicative resources, as well as trajectories of sense-making, across multiple scales, going beyond the two-pole itinerary of macro-micro analysis to examine multiple and layered times and spaces (Collins, 2012; Wortham, 2012 provide helpful reviews). In this way scalar analyses can illuminate order, especially patterns of the production of power, in complex, multi-layered, infinitely diverse semiotic activities. Following the flows and trajectories of a language policy text, the senses made of it, the practices that constitute it, and the power produced by it is a similar endeavor, and thus the scalar frame is useful as a way of empirically recovering these processes. In this vein, I use spatiotemporal scales in this paper to analyze patterns in educational language policy implementation or appropriation in Paraguay, where a major change in ELP in 1994 unsettled longstanding norms of language use in education. I examine how both change and stability were produced in the appropriation of this national policy such that, overall, even though Guaraní successfully entered normative academic language use where it had been prohibited before, its use has benefitted Spanish dominant students more than the minoritized Guaraní dominant students many had hoped that it would. I argue that the scalar frame is productive not only in explaining patterns of appropriation and policy effect, but also in pointing to ways that we might make policy more effectively support linguistic minority students.

## Conceptual framework

### *Policy as discourse and practice*

The need to better explain the appropriation of policy is sometimes discussed as a need to connect macro and micro levels—with policy texts conceptualized as macro level phenomena and classroom practices conceptualized as micro level phenomena. Sometimes they are. But the effort to understand policy text-practice connections is one instantiation of a larger multi-disciplinary, perhaps broadly social scientific, quest to better understand complex relations between macro and micro, structure and agency, constraint and emergence (Wortham, 2012). Conceptualizations of policy as discourse and as sociocultural practice are efforts in this quest to try to capture multiple levels and directions of influence. Both frames place analytical priority on context such that policy texts and activities cannot be understood except in relationship to their contexts and the systems of meaning in which they occur. Research framing policy as discourse (Bacchi, 2000; Ball, 1993; Liddicoat, 2013; Wodak, 2006) focuses attention on the nature of policy as collections of signs that encode some set of representations that then must be made sense of in context by people who interpret them. In linguistic anthropological terms (Silverstein & Urban, 1996; Urban, 1996), policy documents entextualize—make movable—the talk of policy debates. In both linguistic anthropological and critical discourse analytic terms (Johnson, 2011; Wodak & Fairclough, 2010) policy texts are then recontextualized in sites of implementation (Mortimer, 2012, 2013).

A contemporary wave of language policy research draws on anthropological approaches to policy as sociocultural practice (Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009; Shore & Wright, 1997), where implementation is characterized as a process of appropriation: “a kind of taking of policy and making it one’s own” (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 3). This frame accounts for the roles of both actors’ agency and larger political and social structures on the implementation of policy, and it helps to reveal the simultaneous emergence and constraint—change and stability—of cultural patterns in the process. Much of this growing body of work uses ethnography to study language policy (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2009a; McCarty & Warhol, 2011; McCarty, 2011) in an effort to capture local actors’ meaning-making processes, and it attends in particular to the ways that educators act as policymakers from the bottom-up in otherwise top-down policy contexts (Johnson, 2009b; Menken & Garcia, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). It dovetails with increasing attention to the role of local norms, practices, and epistemologies in various aspects of language policy activity (Canagarajah, 2004; Hornberger, 1996).

### *Understanding social phenomena beyond macro and micro*

Seeing policy as discourse and as practice—as a social phenomenon—and the concomitant accounting of both agency and structure, both bottom-up and top-down, in language policy activity has been a major advancement in ELP research as it has been in the study of other social processes. But as many of these processual and practice perspectives on policy show,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/366070>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/366070>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)