

# Texas Education Review

## **An Overview of Language Ideologies in Bilingual Education**

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Volume 5, Issue 1, pp. 57-66 (2017)  
Available online at [www.txedrev.org](http://www.txedrev.org)

## **An Overview of Language Ideologies in Bilingual Education**

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*With the number and visibility of bilingual education programs increasing throughout the US, we review research on the ideas, beliefs, and practices of bilingual education programs with a focus on educational equity for language minoritized students. Specifically, we review research on dominant and counter-hegemonic language ideologies in bilingual education, and conclude with implications for language policy and bilingual education pedagogy.*

As bilingual education, and especially two-way dual language, programs expand throughout the US (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole, & Simpson-Baird, 2015), it has become increasingly important to examine the ideas, beliefs, and practices of these programs in relation to their stated goals, which usually include educational equity for language minoritized students and intercultural understanding as explicit justifications (Lindholm-Leary, 2012). In this overview of language ideologies in bilingual education, we begin with a discussion of the concept of ideology in critical theory, and then briefly trace the development of the study of language ideologies in the field of linguistic anthropology. We then use Martínez's (2013) explanation of dominant and counter-hegemonic language ideologies to review research on bilingual education. We conclude with a discussion of the implications for language policy in education and bilingual education pedagogy. Because of our identities and professional experiences, we mainly discuss Spanish/English bilingual education programs in the US, although we hope that scholars and practitioners who work with additional peoples, languages, and geographic areas will find aspects of this overview generative for their work.

### **From Ideology to Language Ideologies**

The term 'ideology' has been used to signify a wide range of concepts, most of which begin with the notion of a system of beliefs and ideas (Apple, 2004). While different conceptualizations of ideology often vary in scope and function, Apple (2004) notes that the term usually encompasses three distinct features: legitimation, power conflict, and rhetorical style. Recent work has theorized the pervasiveness of ideology, and the force it exerts in delimiting people's most intimate experiences of the world through being and knowing (De Lissovoy, 2015; Leonardo, 2009). Leonardo (2009) analyzes race and racism as a socially-constructed reality invented to legitimate white supremacy. He explains how these constructs now organize social realities throughout the world: "[R]acial ideology has no outside and the person or society immersed in race cannot think outside of it, which represents the racialization of reality and the realization of race" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 38, italics in original). The complex ways that race and language intersect in bilingual education in the US have become increasingly important for racial justice (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2016), especially as the neoliberalization of bilingual

education seeks to valorize fluid language practices and communicative competence only for their potential to generate economic capital (Flores, 2013; Petrovic, 2005).

Interrogating the depths that neoliberal ideology structures individual subjectivity, De Lissovoy (2015) sees ideology as fundamentally organizing individuals' ontological and epistemic orientations and experiences: "[I]deology is not so much within the subject as outside of it in its relationship to its surroundings. As a result, belief is not really a matter of an inner disposition so much as a compulsive repetition of the ideological ritual" (p. 36). The saturation of ideology helps to explain the durability of Euro-American racism, coloniality, and oppression, as well as the ways that these organizing principles may become articulated and maintained through beliefs and feelings about language that pervade much educational theory and practice in the US. As the above articulations of ideology demonstrate, the concept implies legitimation, racialization, and control of everyday practices, all of which contribute to the "commonsensical" and "taken-for-granted" character of ideology. The study of language ideologies explores these concepts in relation to language use.

Moving from studies of language attitudes in the 1960s, which focused on individuals' feelings toward language, inquiry into language ideologies over the past 30 years has emphasized broader social, political, and power relations (Razfar, 2010). Silverstein's (1979) early work on language ideologies emphasized individuals' "rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (p. 193). The embeddedness of the social, and a language's inseparable connection to its users (Williams, 1977), can be inferred from Kroskrity's (2004) definition of language ideologies: "beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social worlds" (p. 498). Irvine and Gal (2000) highlight specific aspects of social life in their definition: "[T]he cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (p. 5). Like De Lissovoy's (2015) "compulsive repetition of the ideological ritual" (p. 36), Razfar (2010) underscores language practices as a fundamental component of language ideologies. Other work has emphasized multiplicity, at times reflected in tensions between individuals' embodied and articulated language ideologies (Henderson & Palmer, 2015; Kroskrity, 2010; Martínez, 2013). We now turn to a review of research in the field of bilingual education that has analyzed dominant language ideologies, or those language-related beliefs, feelings, and practices that serve the interests of groups currently wielding economic, social, and political power (Martínez, 2013).

### **Dominant Language Ideologies**

Understanding that ideologies are positioned within the history of groups of people and used by others to enforce power hierarchies, we turn to a discussion of the hegemony of English (Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2003) as it relates to bilingual education in the US. Specifically we aim to depict the historical nature of English hegemony. We then discuss competing ideologies embedded within bilingual education policies, and thereafter we examine current classroom practices where these ideologies are propagated intentionally or unintentionally.

Hegemony refers to the ideological control of people through asymmetrical power relations, whether by governance, economic trends, or the supremacy of what is in vogue (Gramsci, 1971). Drawing from Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, Darder (2012) declares that "the hegemonic forces of class repression and cultural invocation converge in the dynamics of language domination" in U.S. schools (p. 36). In fact, engrained in the fabric of U.S. policies

and ideologies towards speakers of other languages are dominant ideologies of English as a superior language. From the stripping away of languages of Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans to the emergence of compulsory schooling in the late 1880s and early 1900s, English has always been imposed on historically marginalized populations throughout the existence of the United States of America (Macías, 2014). In a letter to the American Defense Society, Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President of the US, asserted the supremacy of the English language as a key component of his Americanization project for recent immigrants:

We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house (Cited in Pavlenko, 2002).

Statements such as these abound in the ideologies of those living at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in what Ovando (2003) terms, “The Restrictive Period: 1880s-1960s,” an era in which the Americanization of immigrants and harsh punishments were doled out to children who would not speak English. Macías (2014) attests that “language policies and social ideologies” led to the “affirmative valuation and privileging of English” within the US (p. 39). In essence, the historical domination of English in U.S. institutions and schooling practices continues to subalternize speakers of languages and linguistic practices other than English.

The advent of the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) (1968) brought about new hope that language minoritized children would finally receive the linguistic support needed to achieve academically (Crawford, 2004). Situating the BEA within the post-*Brown v. Board of Education Topeka* (1954) decision and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Stewner-Manzanares (1988) argues that the BEA was a tremendous feat in advancing the cause of language minoritized children in the US. The goal of the BEA, however, was to use native language supports as a means to “transition” language minoritized children to “mainstream” English classrooms. Wiese and García (2001) describe this as the central tension of the BEA, in that there are facets of assimilationist ideologies contending with multicultural ones. Operating from a Foucauldian framework, Sinclair (2016) analyzes the language of the BEA and determines that from its inception, accountability measures built into the BEA ultimately maintained the superiority of English over other languages. As a result, the ubiquitous uptake of dominant English ideologies prevented progressive legislation from attaining educational equity for language minoritized children.

Compounding the issues of education policies are deficit thinking (Valencia, 2012) and language-as-problem orientations (Ruiz, 1984) towards language minoritized children. Deficit thinking extends beyond the realm of language and is based on ideas of eugenics, victim blaming, and intelligence testing. San Miguel and Valencia (1998) highlight this history regarding Mexican American children in the US. Similarly, Ruiz (1984) describes how language policy should be reframed from language-as-problem, something that should be remedied or fixed, to language-as-resource, or something that is and should be acknowledged as an asset. More recent work cautions that a language-as-resource orientation could be co-opted by a neoliberal agenda to perpetuate social inequities in U.S. schools (Flores, 2013).

In bilingual classrooms, dominant ideologies, consciously or unconsciously, tend to position English in higher status over Spanish (Palmer, 2009). This is enacted through a strict separation of languages in the classroom, thereby devaluing students’ fluid linguistic repertoires.

Furthermore, in dual language classrooms that ostensibly strive to provide a more equitable education, teachers often let the use of English go unchecked by native English speakers. Testing and accountability measures also coerce the instruction of English in bilingual classrooms as teachers and administrators are mandated to choose a single language for standardized assessments, thereby restricting the language(s) of instruction (Palmer & Rangel, 2010). Guerrero and Guerrero (2013) found that similar practices are observed in bilingual teacher preparation programs, where English is almost exclusively used to prepare bilingual teachers for working with bilingual students. We do not argue that educators as individual actors are solely to blame for the privileging of English in U.S. schools. Rather we want to highlight the hegemonic practices that lead to the privileging of English even as educators attempt to create more equitable learning spaces.

Despite the corpus of research advocating for and avowing the effectiveness of bilingual education for language minoritized children, the “English-Only” movement of the 1990s and early 2000s led by Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley millionaire and conservative political activist, epitomizes the extent to which the hegemony of English persists in U.S. schools and society (Gándara, & Orfield, 2012). States like Utah and North Carolina have redefined bilingual education by using it to support native English speakers in their second language learning while maintaining English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for most language minoritized students. Indeed, even as it has been shown that bilingualism can promote the economic and professional opportunities of language minoritized populations in the US (Callahan & Gándara, 2014), education programs and research that seek to promote upward mobility for language minoritized students and students of Color must also be wary of the neoliberal appropriation of their ideas (Flores, 2013).

### **Counter-Hegemonic Language Ideologies in Bilingual Education**

In opposition to the dominant language ideologies described above are counter-hegemonic language ideologies. We draw from Martínez (2013) to describe the latter as “perspectives on language that challenge, interrogate, and/or contradict the dominant language ideologies” currently imbued with power in societal structures (p. 278). While opposing dominant perspectives and practices, these counter-hegemonic language ideologies are not necessarily explicitly conscious (Martínez, 2013). We highlight two counter-hegemonic orientations, one that conceives of language as inherently fluid, and another that critiques the embeddedness of language within the country’s racialization processes.

#### **Fluid Language Practices**

Rather than describe languages as closed systems of linguistic features, several contemporary theories of language have emphasized a “multilingual turn” (May, 2013) that understands language as social practice. Adding complexity is a general consensus in the field that second language acquisition is a highly individual and variable process, which usually does not resemble monolingual attainment (Valdés, Poza, & Brooks, 2014). Sembiante (2016) describes two important shifts emphasizing the complexity and fluidity of languages:

The first was to question the arbitrary delineation and separation of languages, out of which terms echoing a monolingual and nativist bias were born (i.e. interlanguage, fossilization, native and nonnative speaker, target- and native-likeness), and the second to recognize, as the discursive norm, the multiple language practices of bi/multilinguals (p. 52).

The understanding that each individual has a single linguistic repertoire or idiolect (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015) allows for the explicit questioning of a monolingual bias (Gort, 2012), and of the strict separation of languages in bilingual education programs (Palmer & Martínez, 2013).

Another articulation of fluid language practices is represented in the theory of translanguaging (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015). While recognizing languaging as “the simultaneous process of continuous becoming of ourselves and of our language practices, as we interact and make meaning in the world,” (p. 8), García & Wei (2014) argue that translanguaging involves greater complexity when describing the development of language and literacies of people exposed to systems of language that nation-states have historically constructed as separate. Such practices that transgress the limits of named languages are seen as counter-hegemonic in that they explicitly challenge dominant monolingual norms (García & Wei, 2014; Martínez, 2013). Palmer and Martínez’s (2013) call to “rethink language” and then “think beyond language” begins with a critique of language separation and then invites critical inquiry into the ways that racialization and language intersect in bilingual education.

### **Raciolinguistic Ideologies**

Flores and Rosa (2015) interrogate the naturalization of race and language in U.S. education and popular discourse (Rosa, 2016). They articulate a theory of raciolinguistic ideologies to explain how valuations of speaking subjects vary greatly because of racialization processes and not objective language practices. As Flores and Rosa (2015) explain, “raciolinguistic ideologies produce racialized speaking subjects who are constructed as linguistically deviant even when engaging in linguistic practices positioned as normative or innovative when produced by privileged white subjects” (p. 150). Consequently, the ‘myth of Standard English’ is unevenly applied to students, and serves as a tool of racial stratification when institutionalized in white supremacist policies like *No Child Left Behind* (Leonardo, 2009; Lippi-Green, 2012).

In addition to decades of research in linguistic anthropology that underscores the rules, intellectual complexity, and value of minoritized language practices, Rosa & Flores (writing in Avineri et al., 2015) suggest that researchers turn their attention to the white listening subject who interprets the language practices of people of Color through a deficit lens, always hearing deficiency regardless of how close the speaker comes to an idealized and mythical white norm. Further, when the white listening subject hears and interprets the minoritized language practices of Latinx in the US, they justify Latinxs’ contemporary marginalization by constructing a future in which Latinx either assimilate to a white mythical norm or remain a disenfranchised, racialized group (Rosa, 2016).

Such raciolinguistic ideologies can influence students’ disparate access to bilingual education programs (Cervantes-Soon, 2014), which at times involves the tracking of language minoritized students of Color into ESL programs without instruction in their home languages.

Motha (2014) explores how the legacies of colonialism and racism inhere in the institution of ESL and in discourses of 'Standard English.' The ESL teachers in her study struggled with the district's ESL category of 'World English,' since some Black, native English speaking immigrant students from countries like Jamaica and Sierra Leone were placed in their ESL classes, while other White immigrant students from Western European countries like Scotland were not. Again, this differential application of the 'World English' category signals a racialization process rather than an appraisal of objective 'academic' linguistic practices.

Both in bilingual and monolingual education programs, the construct of appropriateness positions certain language varieties and practices as suitable for academic settings, while othering the practices that index or point to students of Color (Flores & Rosa, 2015). This continues through the neoliberal co-optation of bilingual education, which only values bilingualism within the confines of hegemonic whiteness, or white supremacist, imperialist, and capitalist power relations (Flores, 2013; 2016).

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

In the previous sections we indicated that bilingual education currently finds itself in flux. Whereas advocates are calling for a more critical perspective and a redefinition of linguistic practices, others are appropriating bilingual education to fit a neoliberal agenda. As such, Darder (2012) calls for educators to be cognizant of their tacit ideologies of language and education, and the power imbued therein.

As García and Wei (2014) make clear, many school practices perpetuate the idea of autonomous languages, including many bilingual education programs' approach to bilingualism as "parallel monolingualisms" (p. 51). Moll, Sáez, and Dworin (2001) describe a different approach to developing biliteracy. In these contexts with "unmarked" languages, students could use Spanish or English or both to complete their academic work and develop their biliteracy. As opposed to other spaces that maintain clear distinctions between school and home, the academic content in these classrooms was situated within the children's social contexts, and they were encouraged to use literacy in either language (i.e. their entire linguistic repertoire) as a tool for thinking and learning.

For those of us who advocate bilingual education as a means to ameliorate societal inequities, we must be conscious of the implicit ideologies related to languages, speakers, and educational practices. Flores (2013), for example, cautions against the overlap between neoliberal projects and the creation of an ideal plurilingual subject. He argues that educators must not only teach for plurilingualism, but also critique the system in which plurilingualism is valued. In other words, it is necessary to complicate the ideology that there is (only) a monetary benefit to being plurilingual. Cervantes-Soon (2014) presents a related argument in her study of North Carolina public schools, where she examined dual language programs that privileged the teaching of a second language to native English speakers. Cervantes-Soon calls on educators to embrace a critical and humanizing pedagogy for a more socially just dual language classroom. Martínez (this issue) offers a counter-practice to the erasure of Latinx, Chicax, and Indigenous Mexican students realized in various dual language programs; he suggests that schools explicitly center these students and their language practices in a move "beyond bilingual education" that recognizes the complex multilingualism and multiple identities that language minoritized students of Color bring to U.S. classrooms.

Many bilingual educators have lauded the Seal of Bilingual Literacy as a step in the right direction for emergent bilingual students. Launched in California in 2008, the Seal is an initiative that encourages different educational entities to award “students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation” (Seal of Bilingual Literacy, 2016). Currently there are 23 states and Washington, DC that offer the Seal of Bilingual Literacy, with another seven in the process of formalizing this initiative for their students. However, considering the malleability of hegemonic whitestreaming in the US (Flores, 2016; Gramsci, 1971; Grande, 2015; Urrieta, 2009), we must pose critical questions about the use and intended recipients of the Seal. With the recent history of language policy referendums in states like California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, where bilingual education has suffered from the retrenchment of English-Only policies, we must ask: who is the Seal of Bilingual Literacy for? And what ideologies reflected in this initiative may serve to reproduce existing social hierarchies?

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