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The status of Spanish in language-in-education policies in the United States: Implications for educators

Resumo. La statuso de la hispana lingvo en la eduka politiko de Usono

La lingvoinstruado en Usono estas kompleksa procezo, socipolitike kaj historie influata. Kvankam Usono estas lingve diversa lando kun neniu oficiala nacia lingvo, pli ol 30 ŝtatoj deklaris la anglan oficiala lingvo, kaj neniu deklaris la hispanan oficiala, malgraŭ ĝia vasta uzo kaj socia, ekonomia kaj politika influo en la lando. Tiu ĉi artikolo fokusiĝas pri lingvolernaj politiko kaj praktiko en Usono, ĝi priskribas la malcentran naturon de lingvopolitiko en Usono kaj la povon de ĉiuj ŝtatoj starigi propran politikon. Ni prezentas ke la riĉaj lingvaj rimedoj de la hispana en Usono estis sisteme malfortigitaj kiel la rezulto de politiko pri unulingveco kaj politika subpremo, kiu ne subtenas la denaskajn hispanparolantojn, dume elformas modestan nivelon de hispana lingvokono ĉe nedenaskaj junaj lernantoj de la hispana.

Abstract. Language learning in the United States (US) is a complex process that is sociopolitically and historically situated. Although the US is a linguistically-diverse country with no official national language, more than 30 states have declared English as their official language. None have declared Spanish official, despite its extensive use and social, economic, and political influence in the country. This paper focuses on Spanish language learning policies and practices in the US. It describes the decentralized nature of language policies in the US and the power of each state to set its own policies. We show that the rich linguistic resources of Spanish in the US have systematically been weakened as a result of monolingual policies and political pressures that fail to support native Spanish speakers, while simultaneously building modest levels of Spanish proficiency among non-native early learners of Spanish.

Introduction

Like most countries around the world, the United States (US) is a multilingual nation. With more than 300 million people covering a landmass of approximately 3.5 million miles, language policies and practices are complex in nature and result from a rich history of language practices. There are 50 US states and 14 territories. Importantly, language policies and practices in the US are *decentralized*, moving authority away from the national level toward state level organization and control. For instance, currently in the US only two states, Hawai'i and Alaska, have declared languages other than English as official (Crawford 2000). As of 2016, more than 30 states have declared English as the sole official language (US English, 2016), despite the multilingual reality of the US.

The second most widely used language in the US is Spanish. According to data from the Pew Research Center, there are more than 40 million speakers of Spanish in the US, a growth of more than 230% since 1980 (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera 2013). Despite those large numbers, language policies and planning in the US continue to reflect large social and political movements and narratives about Spanish-speakers. For instance, in the current anti-immigrant climate of the US (Crawford 2000, Massey 2020), immigrants to the US from Mexico and Central America, most of whom speak Spanish as a first language (Zong & Batalova 2018), have been described in the mainstream media as criminals, rapists, and gang members (Wolf 2018). These descriptors fuel increasingly restrictive language policies that view languages other than English — primarily Spanish — as threats to the mainstream, English-dominant US culture, power, and sovereignty (Crawford 2000; Fermoso 2018; Lippi-Green 2011; Menken 2013; Menken & García 2010). In response, over the past century, Spanish, Hispanic, and Latinx advocacy groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), founded in 1929 to advance social equity for Hispanics, continue to make important political, social, and economic changes for Spanish-speakers (LULAC 2019; Massey 2008; Portes & Rumbault 2013; Stepick & Stepick 2009).

This paper focuses on the language-in-education planning, used interchangeably with 'acquisition planning' (Kaplan & Baldauf 2005; Phillipson 1992) for Spanish in the US. Research on the relationship between first and second language acquisition continues to underscore the essential need for strong first language development to build second language and literacy (Ariza & Coady 2018; Coady & Ariza 2015; NICHHD 2000). Effective educational provision includes highly prepared personnel to support second language development; methodologies that strengthen first and second language learning; and curriculum policies that ensure equitable access to curriculum and learning.

Linguistic Ecology of the United States: Socio-historical Context of Spanish

The US has a rich and diverse linguistic ecology. At the time of the first US settlements in what is now the territory of the US, multiple languages were used by native peoples, and some, such as Navajo, Cherokee, Ojibwe, and Hopi, continue to be spoken today (Siebens & Julian 2011). Spanish was an original settlement language as Spanish explorers made their way to the north American continent and established the first American city in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565. As settlements and westward expansion continued, the languages of native peoples became increasingly decimated by settlers. With westward expansion, Spanish remained a widely-used language spoken across a significant geographic area but particularly in the southwest US. For instance, until the Spanish-American War of 1846, modern California was Mexican territory. Spanish was a main language of communication, and the California con-

stitution, drafted in 1849, was written in both English and Spanish. Other southern states such as Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, which border Mexico, retain deep social connections to Mexico. To contextualize Spanish language use in the US, it is noteworthy that more than 13% of the US population uses Spanish as a language in the home (US Census Bureau 2017). Continued growth in number of Spanish speakers is the result of both new immigrants to the US who come from Latin America, as well as continued growth in the Latino population, many of whom speak Spanish. US Census data from 2015 (Colby & Ortman 2015) project that the Hispanic population in the US — the group most likely to speak Spanish — will grow 115 percent, to 119 million by the year 2060.

Although data from decennial US Census and the annual ACS merge Spanish speakers into one demographic group, varieties of Spanish are used throughout the US. Mexican Spanish is used primarily in the southwest US but not exclusively. For instance, data from the 2017 US Census Bureau indicate that Florida has one of the most diverse Hispanic populations in the US. As of 2018, the Puerto Rican population was the second largest group of Spanish speakers in Florida (21%) following Cubans (28.4%). Together, Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish speakers encompass almost half the state's Latino population while the other half consisted of South Americans (18%), Mexicans (13.2%), Central Americans (11.2%, Dominicans (4.3%), and other Latinos (3.6%) (Figueroa 2020).

The number of Spanish speakers in the US wields tremendous social, political, and economic influence in the country. Social movements, such as the Chicano rights movement in the 1960s and the Cuban Refugee crisis of 1959-63 following the overthrow of the Batista government in Cuba by Fidel Castro fortified Spanish speakers as participants in those social and civil rights movements. The Cuban refugee crises lead to the first publicly funded two-way immersion bilingual program in the US in 1963 in Miami, Florida (Coady 2019a), at the time when other bilingual education programs were also beginning to emerge (Fránquiz 2018). Currently, Spanish is the most widely used language as a medium of instruction alongside English in bilingual education programs across the US (Center for Applied Linguistics 2019). Thus, the growth in Spanish as a medium of instruction in school for students is influenced by national trends in US immigration policies, mainstream sentiment, and federal and state educational policies that either promote or restrict bilingualism.

Language-in-Education Planning Framework

Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework of language-in-education policy and planning frames this work. Their framework specifically focuses on the policy and planning decisions made to develop language learning and teaching programs (Baldauf, 2005). Kaplan and Baldauf describe different features of language-in-education planning for acquisition purposes, notably the areas of methodology, curriculum, and

personnel. In reality, these three areas are overlapping in the sense that the language abilities of teachers (personnel planning) support effective implementation (methodology) of curriculum for Spanish. For instance, a teacher who is prepared to teach in bilingual programs with Spanish speakers may utilize curriculums that build upon the literacy skills of children, whereas a teacher who is less prepared in both languages may emphasize one language over another. This is to say that the range of policies associated with methodology, curriculum, and personnel reflects the realities of the micro level language landscape (the classroom) and the resources available to enact the policy at the school and community levels.

Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework is useful in examining how state policies in the US are framed for learners of Spanish. For the US, curriculum resource policies consist of support for bilingual students and families, budgetary considerations to implement the curriculum, access to programs with bilingual or dual language curriculums. Methodology policies consider funding, materials and instruction for learners of Spanish, including the preparation of teachers and educators for students. In addition, methodology includes assessments in Spanish and the ability to monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction. Finally, personnel policy at the state level is a complex array of state-level guidelines and mandates that guide policy and preparation of teachers and educational leaders.

Bilingual Education Programs

Bilingual education programs are programs in which more than one language is used as a medium of instruction to learn academic content. In the US, Spanish is the language most widely used in bilingual programs in addition to English (CAL 2019), and most of those programs are designed for children from Kindergarten through grades 3 or 5, depending on the model. Over the past 20 years, there has been exponential growth in programs increasingly referred to as dual language (Boyle, August, Tabaku, Cole, & Simpson-Baird 2015; García 2009). Examples of bilingual education programs are one-way immersion and two-way immersion (TWI), and Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs. While one-way immersion bilingual education programs have a majority of English learners who speak languages such as Spanish, TWI programs include English speaking students in combination with non-English speakers, both of whom receive education in two languages. TWI programs generally have 50% native English speakers with 50% other language learners such as Spanish speakers. Espinosa (2013) notes the cognitive and social benefits of bilingual education programs for Spanish speakers and learners, stating

English-only instruction in preschool is a detriment to Spanish development without providing an additional boost to English development. Thus, it appears that some form of bilingual education in preschool is additive rather than subtrac-

tive, meaning that children experience overall language gains: they maintain and develop their first language (which has cognitive, social, and cultural benefits) while beginning to acquire English skills. (p. 14)

Espinosa concedes that despite the benefits of bilingual programs for students, several areas impede implementation of the programs, namely access to the programs, high quality instruction, bilingual teachers, and family engagement.

Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs are subtractive in that they provide native language support only insofar as students (mainly Spanish speakers) learn English. The aim of these programs from Kindergarten up to about grade 3 is to transition children from native language instruction into all-English instruction (García 2009). TBE programs have been in decline over the past decade in the US, and TBE programs themselves are transitioning into TWI models. One example is the populated Orange County School District in the Orlando, Florida area. Aligned to similar findings across the US, the district has found that Dual Language (DL) TWI programs are more effective for Spanish-speaking students in both their acquisition of Spanish and of English, and English-speaking students also show gains in both languages (Durán & Palmer 2014; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee 2014; McField & McField 2014; J. Medina, personal communication, 2019). Noting the important role that bilingual and multilingual competencies play in the education of bilingual learners, de Jong, Yilmaz, & Marichal (2019) stated:

Insisting on one-language use by teachers and students may limit students' ability to use their entire linguistic repertoire when working in either language of instruction. This in turn, will restrict student learning and student engagement and can marginalize certain identities and home language and literacy practices. (p. 112)

This increase in TWI programs is indicative of how the field of bilingual education has responded to demands for bilingual language development through bilingual programs in the US (Coady 2019a). In the following section, we focus on language-in-education planning in the state of Florida and demonstrate how policies are interpreted and implemented at the state level.

The Example of Spanish in Florida

States in the US have tremendous scope and power to frame and implement language policies that meet the needs of their populace. We provide examples of this using the state of Florida, particularly demonstrating how states set language-in-education planning policies and implement those policies for learners of Spanish.

The Florida Language Context

The state of Florida has about 21 million people, and approximately 28.7% speak a language other than English in the home (US Census Bureau 2017). The ACS Report of 2017 indicates that about 21% of Florida's population speaks Spanish. Florida declared English its official language in 1988 under Ballot Measure #11, and the status of English is enshrined in the Florida constitution. Despite this declaration, everyday communication from state websites, including Florida voting ballots, are available in Spanish and English. Thus, although Florida policies lean politically toward a monolingual orientation, in practice the state offices must respond to the multilingual realities of the people in the state, and for which Spanish is a prominent and important language.

In addition, although English is the official language of the state, that designation was not intended to affect educational policies. In recent years, however, the Florida Department of Education (FL DOE) has used the state's official English status to circumnavigate the federal government's recommendation for states to develop and use native language assessments for English learner students, of which about 85% are Spanish speakers in Florida (FL DOE 2018). As noted earlier, Florida's proximity to and history with Cuba and Puerto Rico fortifies social ties with those communities, which constitute a significant diaspora (Figueroa 2020). Noteworthy is that subsequent to Castro's takeover of Cuba in 1959, Miami, Florida became the experimental site of the first funded TWI program in the US, Coral Way Elementary School, in 1963 (Coady 2019a). Currently, there are more than 125 primary level bilingual education programs in 12 out of 67 of the state's school districts (Coady 2019b), and about 90% of those programs serve Spanish- and English-speakers as young participants.

Local and state policies address the objectives of language teaching and learning. In particular, there is increasing demand for Spanish-English DL immersion, such as TWI, programs in Florida, especially for children in grades Kindergarten through 5 (FABE 2019), with the goal of building literacy in English and in Spanish. Unfortunately, there are limited resources to prepare teachers for learners of Spanish, and some school districts hire Spanish-language teachers from Spain in bilingual education programs (Mackinney 2016) to meet the demands of personnel policy. This is due to the fact that not enough teachers are prepared with high levels of literacy in Spanish to facilitate instruction in Spanish in formal school settings.

Florida's language policies remain contentious. Since 1990 state level policies for ELs mandate 300 hours of preparation for pre-Kindergarten through grade 6 teachers across five curricular areas: second language teaching methods, assessment, cross cultural communication, applied linguistics, and curriculum. Educators must pass a state assessment to receive the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement on their teaching credential. When this mandate was implemented in 1990 following a legal court case, English learners had been experiencing low academic achievement relative to native English speakers. Despite more than 25 years of

implementation of this teacher education (personnel) policy, the gap between English learning students and native English speakers has not significantly closed, calling into question the effectiveness of this policy (Coady, Li, & Lopez 2019). Due to the restrictive nature of language policies in Florida, it remains difficult to assess Spanish language proficiency among learners of Spanish and of Spanish-speaking students who participate in TWI or TBE programs.

	Curriculum policy		Methodology policy		Personnel policy
•	Subtractive vs. additive programs	•	English language assessment, LEP student plan	•	BA required for lead teachers
•	CPALMS standards: English Language Development & World Languages	•	Limited Spanish lesson/ resources	•	ESOL endorsement (300 master plan points or 15 college semester hours)
•	Objective: Communication in English and understanding in world languages	•	TWI, TBE, or world languages programs (K-3 or K-5)	•	Few Dual language or bilingual certificate programs

Table 1: State-level K-2 Curriculum, Methodology, and Personnel Policies in Florida for Spanish Learning

In terms of personnel policy, all of Florida public school teachers are required to obtain a bachelor's degree and should complete prerequisites in a teacher preparation program (Teacher Certification Degrees 2019). A major challenge in Florida is identifying personnel with adequate training to teach in additive bilingual education programs. School districts offer in-service teacher professional development for Kindergarten through grade 2, and recently a bilingual certificate to prepare educators in TWI 'dual language' education programs has been made available to educators working in those programs. Among credentialed teachers, the 300-hour ESOL requirement to work with non-native English-speaking students remains in place. However, the emphasis of that program is on English language acquisition, suggesting a subtractive orientation and not on building the bilingual landscape of Florida in which Spanish is a resource for growth and learning (Ruiz 1984).

Discussion

This paper examined three areas of Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework related to language-in-education planning for learners of Spanish, using the state of

Florida as an example of how states implement policies in a decentralized government structure. In the case of the US, a small portion of federal funding flows into the state, and local school districts use follow state guidelines and laws to implement local policies. The decentralized structure where states determine and set educational programs, policies, and practices is meant to allow states the flexibility they need to respond to local demographics and needs. However, although there are nearly 300,000 identified English learning students in the state of Florida, with the vast majority Spanish-speakers, the state maintains an official English stance, which underscores the politically-conservative position of unifying people through a misconceived 'one language-one state' policy (Fishman 1991). The policy further advances the nation's English-only narratives as demonstrated in the subtractive orientations of the language-in-education policies. Thus, there are ongoing tensions between the building of linguistic resources through personnel, methodology, and curriculum policies and state financial support to do so.

Moreover, Florida demonstrates how curriculum policy can be additive or subtractive, depending on if Spanish speaking students receive support for their home language. The general position and orientation of the state is on English language acquisition, a subtractive learning policy. Yet despite the state's stance of official English, Spanish is increasingly used in schools, as larger numbers of school districts in the state experience the benefit of two-way immersion and additive bilingual education programs for Spanish and English-speaking students. A major challenge to this growth is the limited number of certified teachers who can provide academic instruction through Spanish into the middle elementary (primary) grades. Furthermore, limited resources are provided to teach content areas in Spanish or promote student's bilingual development, but this can vary tremendously across the state's 67 school districts.

Thus, as this paper demonstrates and argues, personnel, methodology, and curriculum policies are deeply intertwined and difficult to distill, as each affects the other. Personnel policies that include preparing high quality teachers and educators must insist on professional knowledge of the relationship between first and second language acquisition theories. The more educators understand and build upon students' first languages, the stronger students' long-term learning outcomes. The methods used by educators that build on early oracy for first and second language literacy should also include contrastive linguistics for Spanish and English; indeed, bilinguals benefit directly from this metalinguistic knowledge (Coady & Ariza 2010; Coady, Makalela, & Lopez 2019). Finally, the degree to which curriculum policies reflect and affirm students' identities — including their language and cultural identities — will further reveal how successful early language learning is and can be. These three areas preparation, implementation, and access — are clearly interrelated to support early language learning and literacy. What is clear from this paper is that local language-in--education policies are embedded in larger narratives at the state and national levels in the US. This creates friction for speakers of Spanish in the state who aim to maintain and build the home language.

Implications

Spanish speakers continue to be the largest language minoritized group in the US but continue to face among the lowest rate of educational attainment or school readiness, due to the minimal support provided to Spanish learners and access to native language early learner programs (Figueras-Daniel & Barnett 2013). Curriculum, methodology, and personnel policies in the US using the example of the state of Florida provides the following implications. First, systematic survey data of students' home languages and bilingual programs or instruction should be provided by the state with data collected surrounding the types of methodology, personnel, and curriculum policies used and desired. High-quality early childhood education and early bilingual development are known to predict students' academic achievement in later years (Nores, Friedman-Krauss, & Frede 2018). However, language policies regarding bilingual learners' equitable access to bilingual education remain limited in Spanish relative to the number of speakers. In particular, state-level datasets do not provide enrollment data of students' home languages or the DL programs provided in each school district.

Second, high quality curriculum and support for bilingual instruction is in need. Comprehensive policies and curriculum with research-based resources and professional development can further support all learners of Spanish in the US (Nores et al. 2018) — that is, for both native and non-native Spanish speakers. In the US, federal policies toward learners of Spanish, that is, both English speakers learning Spanish and native Spanish speaking students, remains embedded in a national narrative that positions Spanish as an inferior, racialized language but as Valdés (1997) predicted two decades ago, a desirable and economically-advantageous language for speakers of English to learn.

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