Language and Literacy Issues:

Multilingualism and Education
Language and Education

• Language central to Education
  – Education conducted through Language, and sometimes explicitly teaches Language(s)
  – Language Policy often carried out through mass education

• What is Language Policy?
  – Written laws and other documents
  – Unofficial beliefs about language (“conventional wisdom”)

Two Types of Language Policy

• “explicit, written, overt, *de jure*, official and ‘top-down’ decision-making about language”

• “implicit, unwritten, covert, *de facto*, grass-roots and unofficial ideas and assumptions” (Schiffman 2006:11) about language in a particular culture

– *Linguistic culture (Schiffman, 1996)*
Linguistic Culture

• Pervades everyday thinking about language
• Varies across cultures and historical periods
• Central to education

Educators who “appreciate the power, scope and latent contradictions” of this can “take up the challenge of deconstructing and reconstructing the linguistic ideologies that surround [and mitigate] their efforts” (McGroarty 2010: 30)
Linguistic Culture = Language Ideologies

• “Representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world are what we mean by ‘language ideology’” (Woolard, 1998: 3)

• Beliefs about language and language use that involve:
  – social and cultural conceptions of personhood, citizenship, morality, quality and value, etc.
  – social hierarchies (ideologies have material effects in world)
Language Ideologies and Education

• Ideology of Language Standardization
• Ideology of Monolingualism
• Often discussed as though separate, but function together and emerged together historically
  – modernization and rise of European nation-states in 17th and 18th centuries (Anderson 1983)
History of Standard English

• Printing (15th c) led to increased uniformity in written English (spelling standardized)
• Written English became model for standard
  — continuing change and variation in spoken English
  — little change over centuries in written English
• Pressures for standardization not until 1700s
  (when English was firmly established, over French, as national language)
18th Century Britain

- 18th century advances in technology, literacy, communication, and education yielded “a much more widespread consciousness of relatively uniform ‘correct’ English than had been possible before” (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 29)

- Minority languages of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland fared less well (Schiffman 1996: 214)

- Ideology of monolingualism (one language-one nation) ascendant
18th Century France

• French Revolution promoted idea that “language makes the nation” (Schiffman 1996: 105)
  – only Standard French could express ideals of the Revolution
  – regional dialects and languages (all referred to as *patois*) not adequate for this
  – both monarchy & Church (in *ancien regime*) had promoted regional dialects and languages (for different reasons), so anticlericalism of Revolution doubly reinforced policy of *francisation*, or enforcing use of “national” language
Universal Education in France

• Revolutionary language policy carried out through mass education

• *Patois* viewed “as barriers to communication, as obstacles to the spread of the ideas of the Revolution, which, once made available to every citizen, would enlighten and liberate them” (Schiffman 1996: 95)
Aligned Language Ideologies

• Pairing of ideology of standardization with ideology of monolingualism (one nation-one language)

• Pairing yielded “ideology of contempt” toward minority languages and dialects (Dorian, 1998)
  – European colonialism carried this ideology around the world
  – contributed to disappearance of “small languages” worldwide
European-Origin Language Ideologies

• Monolingualism in standard language = desirable norm (widespread, historically deep language ideology)
• Belief in “survival of the fittest” social Darwinism of language (Dorian 1998: 9-11)
• Belief that bilingualism is heavy burden (Dorian 1998: 9-11)
• Explains furor over U.S. “Ebonics” controversy (1996) & negative attitudes toward code-switching and mixed languages (e.g., Creoles)
Culture of “Monoglot Standard” (Silverstein 1996)

• U.S. paradox: Societal plurilingualism evident everywhere, yet persistent belief that everyone should acquire and use an ideal Standard English widely shared, even across the political spectrum

• Makes “natural” the connections between particular linguistic features and particular groups

• Uneducated speakers described as imprecise and inaccurate (“sloppy”) in language use (rather than using vernacular dialects and languages)
What is Standard English?

• In U.S. what is considered Standard varies regionally (unlike Europe)
• What distinguishes any particular language use as “Standard” is actually the absence of stigmatized linguistic forms, not the presence of particular forms (Farr and Daniels 1986)
• English in practice (of everyone) shows continuous variation in linguistic form across contexts, genres, and users
Vernacular U.S. English

• In stream of language-in-use, particular linguistic forms become salient and stigmatized because they are linked to particular categories of people (not because of their intrinsic characteristics)
  – Multiple negatives index “working class” English
  – Devoicing final –z sound \( \rightarrow s \) (shoes as /šus/) indexes Chicano English
  – Prepositions: use of on for both in and on (from influence of Spanish en) indexes Spanish influence
Multilingual Realities

• Multilingual speakers worldwide mix different languages and dialects as they speak ("Plurilingualism")
• Mixed languages (named varieties)
  – "substantial amounts of morpho-syntactic and/or lexical material from at least two different languages" (Muysken 2009: 315)
    • Media Lengua (from Quechua & Spanish in Ecuador)
    • Michif (French & Cree in Western Canada and U.S.)
Code Switching/Mixing

• Use of two languages within (switching) and across (mixing) sentences

• Switch not random, but functionally motivated (Gumperz 1982)
  – Switch with change in topic, participants, or setting (situational switching)
  – Switch for a particular communicative effect, e.g., to mark quotation, indicate emphasis, specify addressee (metaphorical switching)
  – Signal to communicate social meaning (e.g., solidarity)
Levels of Multilingualism

- Society level: multilingualism, official languages, diglossia, mixed languages
- Individual level: plurilingualism
  - linguistic practices of individuals in interaction
  - varying competence in each language
  - actual varieties of languages used by plurilinguals may include vernacular dialects
Traditional Views of Bilingualism

- Bilinguals as “double monolinguals”
- Coexistence of two separate (cognitive) linguistic systems
- “Balanced Bilingualism” the ideal
- Language = “whole, bounded” entity, rather than varying, shared set of resources
  - What is English, really? Or Spanish?
  - Do all English (or Spanish) speakers have the same cognitive and linguistic system?
Current Views of Bilingualism

• Bilinguals not equally competent in both languages in all contexts
• Plurilingualism in practice: speakers draw on linguistic resources from multiple language varieties, including vernacular dialects
• Empirical reality: varieties of various languages more overlapping than discrete, both cognitively and in use
Globalization and Multilingualism

• Circulation of ideas, goods, people, and languages intensifies plurilingual practices
• New centrality of language within global economy
• Undermines link between one language-one nation
• Contests ideologies of monolingualism and language standardization
• Disrupts ethnicity = nation
Worldwide Migration

• Intensity of contemporary migration
  – “1 in every 35 people is an international migrant” (Moyer and Rojo 2007: 137)
  – monolingualism no longer sustainable as condition for citizenship
  – multiple identities and citizenships the reality
    • Both U.S. and Mexico allow dual citizenship
    • Transnational students experience varying identities across contexts (neither entirely “Mexican” nor “American”)
Latin American (primarily Mexican) students in U.S. schools

• Do they always speak (only) Spanish?
  – Some 2\textsuperscript{nd}+ generations do not know Spanish
  – Some newcomers learn English in Mexico
    • Transnational relatives and friends
    • Use of internet to learn English
  – May speak indigenous language (see Map 1) instead of, or in addition to, Spanish and/or English
    • Chicago classroom with indigenous language speakers placed in bilingual education (all in Spanish)
U.S. Educational Context

- Transition from oral informal Spanish → English literacy
  - Need for development of Spanish → academic Spanish, literacy in Spanish → biliteracy
  - Oral informal English learned more quickly (2-3 years) than Academic English (6-7 years)
  - Literacy first in native language, then transition to second language (most effective)
- Dual Immersion schools best model of bilingual education
- Power of English overwhelming
  - Real issue is Spanish maintenance, not English learning and use
U.S. History

• Spanish in what is now U.S. before English (Southwest, Florida)
• French in upper Midwest (and Michif)
• German in Middle Atlantic, South, Midwest, West
  – 500,000 German speakers in Chicago in 1900
  – “Miami in 1968 (Spanish speakers) pales in comparison with Milwaukee in 1868 (German speakers)”
• Tradition of bilingual education in U.S.
  – German in Midwest (e.g., Cincinnati, Columbus)
Bilingualism in U.S. History

• Loss of many languages over generations
  – Indigenous languages purposefully eradicated
    • Boarding Schools to acculturate Indians
  – Anti-immigrant & English Only movements periodically since colonial times
    • German-Americans harassed (WWI), German language teaching and use eradicated
    • Courts inundated with name-change requests (German names anglicized); Streets & Parks changed from German → English; German-origins obscured
German-American Heritage Map 2
Contemporary U.S.

- Anti-immigrant ideologies, once again
- Anxieties displaced onto language → English Only
- Yet many businesses pro-immigrant labor (since 1920s)
- Globalization transforming the world
  - Immigrants worldwide
  - Multilingualism within national borders
  - Even with Global English, need for other languages in business and international relations
Recommendations

• Support heritage language maintenance and development, including literacy
• Acknowledge validity of vernacular language varieties (in English, Spanish, etc.)
• Replace “ideology of contempt” toward “small” dialects and languages with ideology of respect
• Value multilingualism over monolingualism