(Re)Producing Linguistic Hierarchies in the United States: Language Ideologies of Function and Form in Public Schools

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Abstract

In an attempt to further understand the unfolding effects of Arizona's anti-bilingual education law passed in 2000 (Proposition 203), this article examines the generation and perpetuation of language ideologies in public schools with predominant language-minority student populations. Through depictions of language use in terms of academic (under)achievement and economic advancement, educators and immigrant students from an urban Arizona school district exhibit distinct ideologies toward the function and form of both English and Spanish.

1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the future success of immigrant students is inescapably linked to public schools (Ramos & Johnson, 2008), policymakers in the US state of Arizona have succeeded in eliminating valuable language resources, limiting educator discretion, and blocking access to higher education. In 2000, Proposition 203 *English for the Children* was approved by voters in Arizona—essentially terminating bilingual education services in favor of a monolithic sink-or-swim approach called *Sheltered English Immersion* (now called *Structured* English Immersion). This proposition asserted that bilingual education programs were not enabling language-minority students to learn English quickly or effectively, which both impeded their academic development (Johnson*,* 2005; Wright, 2005a) and excluded them from achieving the "American Dream" (Johnson, 2006). As an alternative to bilingual education, Proposition 203 promoted English immersion instruction—for a time period not usually to exceed 180 days—to prepare non-English-speaking students for grade-level classes taught entirely in English (Arizona Department of Education, 2000). Within a few years after the implementation of Proposition 203, schools with high numbers of language-minority students began to feel a severe academic impact and continued to struggle to meet state and federal education standards (Johnson, 2008a; Krashen et al., 2007; Mahoney et al., 2004; Mahoney et al., 2005; Wright, 2005b; Wright & Pu, 2005; Wright & Choi, 2006

In this discussion, I explore the unfolding effects of Proposition 203 on both immigrant students and educators in contexts where the linguistic contention between English and Spanish is implicated in widespread academic underachievement. In an attempt to better understand the influence of anti-bilingual education laws, this paper looks at the relationship between language policies and the (re)construction of language ideologies as they are manifested in public schools that service immigrant communities in the US city of Phoenix, Arizona. From an ethnographic perspective, I examine ideologically grounded beliefs in terms of how students and educators describe language use within a school district comprising a predominantly Mexican immigrant population. Through discussions and interviews with students and educators, distinct language ideologies toward the function and form of English and Spanish repeatedly emerged. Here, I attempt to demonstrate how these ideologies contribute to academic underachievement by shaping the way educators view immigrant students and their language abilities. Shedding light on the biased nature of such ideologies can heighten a critical linguistic awareness on the part of both educators and students to contest the prescriptive orientation of laws that subordinate minority languages.

1. 1 Sociopolitical Landscape

Considering the current political environment surrounding immigration and "homeland security" in the United States (see: www.homelandsecurity.com/), nowhere is language use more disputed than in states along the US-Mexico border. Since 2000, Arizona's sociopolitical environment has become increasingly restrictive toward immigrants—especially those from Mexico. In order to fully understand the rationale behind Arizona's Proposition 203, it is necessary to view it as stemming from a larger social matrix of intolerance toward immigrants and language-minorities that has pervaded the US over the

last century (McCarty, 2004; Ovando, 2003; Takaki, 1993). While promoted as a benevolent attempt to give language-minority students the "gift" of English (Johnson, 2005), the underlying premise of Proposition 203 viewed minority languages (and cultures) from a deficit orientation (Hadjistassou, 2008). In her comments on the position of opponents of Proposition 203, the Chairperson of Arizona's branch of *English for the Children* (Maria Mendoza) asked, "Why do they want to keep them [language-minority students] as prisoners in their culture and their heritage?" (quoted in D. Gonzalez, 2000, B1). Not only does this demonstrate an inherently pejorative ideological orientation toward minority-cultures, it underscores *English for the Children's* primary goal of deculturating linguistic-minority groups through language policy.

Even though Proposition 203 symbolizes a direct attack on linguistic diversity in public schools (Johnson, 2008b), it was not passed within a social vacuum. Regardless of the multiple ways Latino immigrants enrich Arizona (Gans, 2007), they are readily defamed as "illegal" by the public and media to such an extent that policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and voters are quick to attribute many of Arizona's social ills to immigrant communities (Johnson, 2005). This acrimonious environment propelled by panic and ignorance has produced a surge in anti-immigrant legislation over the past decade. Most recently (April 2010), Arizona's Governor Jan Brewer signed into law the *Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act* (Arizona Senate Bill 1070 and Arizona House Bill 2162), obligating law enforcement officers to require proof of legal immigration status during lawful detention processes. Individuals without immediate proof of authorized immigration status could be fined, arrested, and/or deported. Even though a federal judge placed a preliminary injunction on the Act one day before it went into law, the message that immigrants are not welcome in Arizona had already been deeply seared into the overall public discourse.

While this latest attempt to banish undocumented immigrants was the center of a national debate on immigration legislation for much of 2010, legal tactics of fear and repression have occupied a constant presence in the political environment for many years. In 2006, for example, Arizona voters expressed their discontent with immigration policies by passing the following referenda:

- Proposition 100 (Limits bail opportunities for undocumented immigrants.)
- Proposition 102 (Denies civil lawsuit awards for undocumented immigrants.)
- Proposition 300 (Dissolves undocumented immigrants' right to in-state tuition, taxpayer funded adult education, and taxpayer funded childcare.)
- Proposition 103 (Establishes English as the official language of Arizona.)

Not only do referenda like these place severe limitations on immigrant students and their family members, they exacerbate the atmosphere of divisiveness and suspicion that permeates language-minority communities. In addition to being immersed within a social context that is fraught with animosity towards immigrants, schools in Arizona are unfortunately caught within an overbearing political environment that emphasizes standardization and accountability. In order to draw attention to the malaise produced by the immigration debate,

I employ an ethnographic approach to amplify the voices of educators and students who operate within this environment of cultural and academic tension on a daily basis.

2. Theoretical Frame

2.1 Language Ideologies

Comprehending why laws are passed that overtly target and marginalize specific groups requires a clear explanation of the ideological forces that drive such policies. This tends to be problematic considering the multitude of ways in which the concept of "ideology" is perceived and applied. Woolard (1998) addresses this manifold concept by describing four distinct "strands" of ideology (pp. 5-7). To underscore the depth to which ideological forces structure social, political, and economic interactions, I draw from Woolard's third strand which situates ideology in terms of positions of power. From this stance, ideology constitutes the nexus of ideas, discourses, and signifying practices propelling the struggle to acquire or maintain power.   Moreover, ideology should be viewed as a dynamic process involving the production of meanings and ideas such that beliefs are constantly (re)shaped through social interactions. This account of ideology underscores the fluid and interactional nature of the forces that channel social relationships and practices.

It is also important to note that ideology—as a force—cannot be isolated to interpersonal social interactions; rather, all interactions must be viewed as embedded within a wider context determined by larger social currents. As Martínez-Roldán and Malavé (2004) suggest:

> to understand the social aspect of ideology we have to go beyond both the cognitive processes and social interactions at the micro level.   We cannot overlook the broader social context, particularly the power relations and conflicts between groups that are competing for the control or access to economic resources, services, and other material things they esteem or need for their survival and welfare. (p. 161)

Martínez-Roldán and Malavé's depiction is useful for bridging dominant group interests to the promotion of specific policies. Attributing ideology to the erection of social hierarchies reminds us that socially dominant groups strategically situate themselves within an institutional framework designed to perpetuate their positions of power. From a historical perspective, one of the most effective ways to accomplish this has been to repress the languages of groups perceived as "dangerously different" (McCarty, 2004). Pointing out the contribution of ideology in the formation of socially oppressive policies highlights the role of certain forms of language as instruments of power and social control (Kroskrity, 1998). Thus, Arizona's Proposition 203 can be seen as a mechanism to maintain the dominance of English in a culturally diverse context.

This intimate connection between ideology and language is best explained through a language ideologies framework (Kroskrity, 2000; Scheiffelin et al., 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). While the general notion of language ideologies can essentially be boiled down to beliefs about the superiority and inferiority of different languages and dialects (Kroskrity, 2006), a more structured depiction is necessary to analyze the processes through

which these beliefs are reified and maintained. Previous descriptions of power-laden discourses within majority/minority language contexts (Dueñas González & Melis, 2000; Makihara & Schieffelin, 2007; Mar-Molinero & Stevenson, 2006; Rahman, 2002; Volk & Angelova, 2007) help us understand that many variables must be considered when taking into account how the act of using a specific language is inextricably linked to larger "regimes of language" (Kroskrity, 2000).

Recognizing how language ideologies develop and proliferate requires a clear distinction between different levels of social phenomena. In this discussion, focusing on the difference between macropolitical and microinteractional contexts allows us to understand how patterns of communication are connected to—and determined by—larger social forces. This fundamental notion of language ideologies "relates the microculture of communicative action to political economic considerations of power and social inequality, confronting macrosocial constraints on language behavior" (Woolard & Scheffelin, 1994, p. 72).

By focusing our attention on the microinteractional level, we are able to see how ideological currents are realized in everyday patterns of social behavior. The tacit ideologies that structure linguistic patterns in classrooms are manifested both in the way language is used and described by educators and students. Acknowledging that "when human beings use language, they are simultaneously displaying their beliefs about language" (Razfar, 2003, p. 245), a close examination of the ways in which teachers and students discuss language(s) illuminates how ideology arranges linguistic forms hierarchically in classroom contexts. While there are many ways in which beliefs about language surface, I concentrate on the ideologies that shape how individuals understand the inherent function of a given language, as well as how they perceive the different forms that it takes.

2.2 Ideologies of Function

My delineation of ideologies of *function* encompasses beliefs about the utility and purpose of languages and language abilities. On the most basic level, ideologies of function address an individual's understanding of "why" a particular language is (or should be) used. This orientation entails underlying assumptions about the value that particular languages have—in comparison to others—for a given purpose. Some relevant examples include equating language proficiency to economic prosperity (A. Gonzalez, 2000; Rahman, 2002), using "official" languages to shape cultural identity (Errington, 2000; Woolard, 1989), and utilizing native languages to proselytize and evangelize (Handman, 2007). Furthermore, the viewpoints concerning an inherent function of a given language are related to Fishman's (2001) concept of the "Great Tradition." The Great Tradition refers to the set of shared beliefs within a group of people concerning the historical relationship between their language and their symbolic status. In the mind of the community, the Great Tradition naturally justifies the prevalence and/or dominance of one language over others. The ideologies of function outlined in this paper elucidate the underlying relationship of Spanish and English to citizenship, socioeconomic opportunity, and academic achievement.

2.3 Ideologies of Form

In addition to assumptions about "why" a language should be used, perceptions of "how" it should look and sound are also ideologically grounded. Ideologies concerning the *form* of a given language entail a perceived superiority and inferiority of particular dialectal variations. Ideologies of form echo what Spolsky (2004) describes as an "ideology of purity" that differentiates between "good" and "bad" language (pp. 22-25). These types of viewpoints mirror the fundamental tenets of prescriptivism—the notion that certain varieties of language are inherently more valuable than others (Crystal, 1986). Contexts in which a focus on linguistic form has been examined include "Spanglish bashing" (Zentella, 2002), African American Vernacular English and Ebonics (Lippi-Green, 2000; Baugh, 2000), dispossessing Spanish in favor of English (Aparicio, 2000), good and bad language in Tonga (Phillips, 2000), and refuting the notion of semilingualism (MacSwan, 2000). For the purpose of my discussion, ideologies of form are more narrowly defined by the ways in which linguistic characteristics are viewed in terms of academic achievement and social prosperity. In the contexts surrounding teachers and students described here, ideologies of form surface in descriptions of the legitimacy of language varieties in regards to both English and Spanish.

Narrowing the overarching concept of language ideologies down to the distinct ideologies of function and form is helpful when concentrating on specific descriptions of language use and control. Listening to how individuals describe language sheds light on how policies developed and implemented on a macropolitical level affect microinteractional behaviors that take place in the classroom. In this vein, I view language policies as ideologically propelled social constructs that reflect the interests of the dominant group(s), thereby reproducing unequal relationships of power and access within the larger society (McCarty, 2002, 2004). With the macropolitical context surrounding the development of Proposition 203 and other anti-immigrant policies as a social backdrop, I utilize the framework espoused by ideologies of function and form here to examine repercussions of the micro-level interactions that perpetuate beliefs about minority languages.

3. Research Context and Methods

This discussion stems from a three-year ethnographic project in the Milagros School District (pseudonym) in Phoenix, Arizona (Johnson, 2008a). This area has a large Mexican immigrant population—both documented and undocumented—and Spanish is the primary home and community language. The Milagros district comprises four K-8 schools located in a highly industrial sector of west Phoenix. According to the Arizona Department of Education, the four Milagros schools serviced 2919 students during the 2007-2008 school year. While 60% of the students are *officially* classified as English Language Learners (ELL), there are very few students for whom Spanish is not their first language (approximately 5%).

From a socioeconomic perspective, most of the students come from impoverished households. Due to this difficult economic environment, Milagros is identified as a Title I school district (i.e., qualifying for federal funding to support programs to compensate for low economic levels in the community). As part of Title I status, schools receive assistance to subsidize the cost of school meals for students who demonstrate economic need. In this case, the Milagros

district has a 100% participation in Arizona's Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. This index traditionally represents the percent of students who come from economically impoverished families. Moreover, recent assessments estimate that approximately 35-40% of families within the district live in extreme poverty. Even more disturbing, approximately 40% of all students (and 50% of males) from the Milagros district do not finish high school (as reported by the district).

Academically, the Milagros district consistently struggles to meet both federal and state standards. As designated by the Arizona Department of Education (2011a), all four schools have been labeled as "Underperforming." According to federal policy, Milagros had failed to meet *Adequate Yearly Progress* (Arizona Department of Education, 2011b) as a district for each of the 5 (documented) years prior to the writing of this paper (2005—2009). In accordance to Section 1116 of the federal education policy No Child Left Behind (NCLB), any school receiving Title I funds will be placed in federal "School Improvement Status" after failing to make AYP for a second consecutive year. If AYP is not met during the years subsequent to being designated School Improvement Status, schools, administrators, and teachers are subject to harsh penalties (Arizona Department of Education, 2011a). Currently, all four schools are in School Improvement Status.

When accountability and standards are discussed among educators, the general theme of language is frequently conflated with the achievement challenges facing the Milagros schools such that the overall lack of academic success is associated with the prevalence of Spanish. While implementing the guidelines of Proposition 203 within the Arizona Department of Education's assessment matrix might be feasible in some districts, the Milagros schools are faced with a dearth of resources to adequately service such a high language-minority population. According to the Milagros Bilingual Education Director, the district's answer to this situation is to ensure that all teachers implement structured English immersion in their classrooms. Yet, when asked about this strategy, one veteran classroom teacher reported:

> [administrators] have to have their teachers trained in SEI. But as far as…how good it is…I think provisional SEI is only six hours that are needed, or forty-five, I'm not sure. So the teacher[s] may take it, but they're not really enforcing it or implementing it in the classroom. (Mr. Jiménez, 6th grade teacher)

Considering that every qualifying language-minority student is required to receive (at least) one year of structured English immersion (SEI), Mr. Jiménez's comments illustrate that the reality of implementing such a program in a district in which over 60% are (officially) classified as "English Language Learners" (ELL) is fraught with complications.

3.1 Data Collection

Within this complex context, an ethnographic approach was the most effective "way of seeing" (Wolcott, 2008) how language patterns and academic achievement were experienced in the classroom on a daily basis. The data described in this paper were collected through participant observations, student journals, and recorded structured interviews with students and educators from all four schools. As a participant observer, I was involved with the

Milagros schools in a variety of different capacities. Officially, my roles in the classroom included serving as a classroom volunteer, instructional assistant after school program instructor, adult ESL instructor, substitute teacher, and summer school teacher.

While I consider all of my roles in the Milagros schools as participant observation, there were multiple occasions where I was able to simply observe (i.e., without an official task) classroom interactions during my visits as a "classroom volunteer." In addition to my participation in the classroom setting, I was also employed as an Americorps VISTA volunteer (see: www.americorps.gov/about/programs/vista.asp) to help develop a youth-leadership group in the Milagros community. This position afforded me countless hours with students and parents outside of the school context. My involvement with the Milagros district in these capacities was critical for developing so many sound relationships with students and educators.

3.2 Participants

After two years of working in the Milagros district, I was able to recruit multiple consultants who eagerly agreed to discuss their views in semi-structured, individual interviews. The interviews focused on three general themes: language policy, resources, and language-minority students. Comments that contained ideological themes were coded and categorized as either ideologies of "form" or "function." All of the interviews took place in the schools. Educators were interviewed after school in their classrooms, and students were interviewed during school in an open courtyard (I was given permission by administrators and teachers to pull students out of class for 30 minutes).

Middle school students from all four schools were recruited on a voluntary basis. The student interview-consultants came from a variety of social and linguistic backgrounds, and their language abilities spanned a broad spectrum. While all students were native Spanish-speakers, most of them were bilingual speakers of both Spanish and English. I also made it a point to include students who had been in the US for varying lengths of time; whereas some participants were born US, others had only been in the country for under a year. While there were only thirty total student-interview consultants, the combination of their background experiences and language characteristics is representative of any middle school classroom in the Milagros district. Specifically, ten of the students were born in the US, nineteen were born in Mexico, and one student was born in Cuba. While most students were born in Mexico and then moved to the US, one student was born in the US, moved to Mexico when she was two years old, and did not return until age ten.

Understanding the experiences of language-minority students also requires looking at the perspectives of educators in the Milagros district. When describing the Milagros faculty, there are some significant characteristics to consider. First, it is notable to mention that there is a high teacher turnover rate in the Milagros district; many leave before their third year (approximately 46% of the teachers have three or less years of experience). Also, many teachers were recruited from the Midwest US (primarily due to a lack of teaching jobs in that region), and the vast majority of the educators in the Milagros schools are Anglo and monolingual English-speakers. The educator consultants recruited for this project reflect

these demographic and professional trends. I have included a list of my interview consultants below. To protect their identities, the years of experience category is given as a range of years (0-4, 5-10, 11-20, and 21-30). Additionally, their state of origin is listed according to a particular region of the United States.

Table 1.   Educator Interview Consultants

Name	Grade/Subject Taught	Years Experience	US Region of Origen
1. Ms. Atwell	6th grade	5-10	Northeast
2. Ms. Castillo	Principal	21-30	Southwest
3. Mr. Jimenez	6th grade	5-10	Southwest
4. Ms. King	5th grade	0-4	Midwest
5. Ms. Lang	3rd grade	0-4	Midwest
6. Ms. Mack	Physical Education	0-4	Northeast
7. Mr. Powers	6th grade	0-4	Midwest
8. Ms. Sandoval	Counselor	21-30	Southwest
9. Ms. Walters	7th grade	0-4	Midwest
10. Mr. Walker	7th	21-30	Midwest

While my overall research focuses on the middle school level (teachers # 1, 3, 7, 9, and 10), I thought it would be appropriate to include educators from the other levels as well. Whereas the third grade teacher (#5) provides a glimpse of what it is like working with students in early-education context, the fifth grade teacher (#4) describes the experiences of students who are transitioning into the middle school level. The physical education teacher (#6) is in an interesting position because she works with students from all nine grades (K-8). Finally, the perspectives of the counselor (#8) and the principal (#2) demonstrate the complexity involved in managing interactions among students, school personal, and outside community members. The educators' candid discussions sketch a detailed picture of how language use is negotiated on a daily basis. Even though the views expressed by these ten educators do not represent the entire faculty, they are *representative* of the types of experiences and opinions that pervade the schools and individual classrooms in the Milagros district.

In addition to the thirty students (grades 5-8) and ten educators who participated in structured interviews concerning language policies and academic achievement, ten middle school students contributed by writing personal ethnographic journals over a span of thirteen months—resulting in 477 total journal entries. I was able to recruit the journal consultants from the Americorps youth-leadership group in which I was involved. Knowing the students in this capacity allowed me to use the journals to create a more personal dialogue with them. It also gave me the opportunity to work with them on developing different skills for interpreting and recording their experiences. The journal authors were given the liberty to respond to weekly topic prompts (e.g., descriptions of interactions between Spanish-speaking students and English-speaking teachers) or write about any other personal thoughts or experiences. The longitudinal and personal nature of the ethnographic journals provided an

in-depth perspective of the daily lives of language-minority students in this community. The journals allowed me to better understand how students experience immigration, language, poverty, and education in the Milagros district. Furthermore, the themes and ideas detailed in the journal entries assisted in the development of my interview questions.

4. Analysis

During interviews and in the journal entries, my consultants consistently relied on ideological assumptions about the *function* and *form* of language to rationalize the academic and social ecology of the Milagros schools. With Proposition 203 as a platform for discussing the use of Spanish and English at school, I was able to discern the ways in which language underscores all classroom interactions. In the Milagros context, the language that students speak—as well as how they speak it—structures the way activities are designed, resources are allotted, and expectations are established. Moreover, the underlying perceptions of educators are communicated to students through the ways in which language is simultaneously described and used at school. When English and Spanish are juxtaposed in terms of academic and economic achievement, implicit assumptions about function and form continue to fortify linguistic hierarchies—both between and within languages. Below, I draw from dialogues with educators and students to evince the prevalence of ideologies of function and form, and demonstrate their relationship to Proposition 203. Through these descriptions of language use within the Milagros schools, the ideological processes involved in the construction and perpetuation of linguistic and cultural subordination is made evident.

4.1 Ideologies of Function

Proposition 203 stems from a language-as-a-problem orientation (Ruiz, 1984). By outlawing bilingual education, Proposition 203 clearly promotes the message that English is superior and all other languages are an impediment to learning. While opinions concerning the use of minority-languages in schools have varied throughout the history of the US (Ovando, 2003), Proposition 203 has caused a drastic shift in the way the Milagros educators currently view language. When asked to describe what the Milagros district was like before Proposition 203, Ms. Sandoval (school counselor) explained that "there used to be an emphasis on the value of being biliterate and bilingual…the focus now is on let's get these kids able to read English and function in English and take a test in English." In most school districts, the contrast between pre and post Proposition 203 implementation might not be as stark, but in districts like Milagros—with 90% (+) students coming from home languages other than English—the effects are magnified.

Eight years after Proposition 203 was passed, the emphasis on English in the classroom was so ingrained that some educators did not even consider Spanish as having a function in a school context. According to one principal, the Milagros educators are placed in such a difficult situation due to their students' inherent lack of language abilities. Ms. Castillo (Principal) openly professed, "When you don't have a language, which many of our kids that are coming to us, they don't have a language, there is nothing to build on. So you have to go to square one and start with square one." Beyond positioning English as superior, this viewpoint completely negates the value of Spanish—either as a resource to help develop

second language academic literacy skills or even a basic source of knowledge. Even more disturbing is the fact that these types of perceptions are so readily described by administrators—who are extremely influential in the development of school-wide values and perceptions.

Stemming from this deficit view of the students' home language, many of the Milagros educators are quick to mention language as the most significant obstacle facing students in the classrooms. When asked what poses the greatest challenge for their language-minority students, educators detailed the different ways language affects their students. While some referred to Spanish as a "barrier," it was also described as a "crutch" and an "excuse." Comments like these relegate the function of Spanish as an impediment, a deterrent, or an inappropriate supplement for English. Taking into consideration that instructional use of languages other than English is illegal and may result in punitive measures for educators (see Arizona Department of Education, 2000: Proposition 203, Sections 15-751 and 15-754), this perception of Spanish can be directly tied to the harsh architecture of Proposition 203, as well as the immense emphasis on high stakes testing in Arizona.

Similarly, native language abilities are seen as deterring the students' motivation to learn English. Focusing on the prevalence of language-minority speakers in the schools and community, Ms. Atwell (6th grade teacher) explained that if her students *had* to learn English they probably would, but "they are not faced with that challenge." This comment struck me as rather peculiar since all school materials, activities, and instruction are in English. Educators operating from this vantage point are quick to couch the academic challenges facing language-minority students in terms of exposure to Spanish outside of the school context. While viewpoints like this indirectly fault the prevalence of Spanish in the larger community for language patterns within the school, other educators offered ostensibly positive depictions of language use in the larger social context. Mr. Walker (7th grade teacher) linked the community language to the potential for monetary success:

> It's not that they get retarded by being in an area where they speak predominantly Spanish, where you have Spanish billboards, Spanish menus, all the adults speak Spanish. They still want to be able speak English because they're in the United States, and they see all the people with money are bilingual.

Superficially, this statement appears to promote bilingualism and the function of Spanish as a means to wealth. Though, Mr. Walker followed this comment by emphatically stating, "I show them a book and I say this is your ticket out of this ghetto." Whereas he reassures his students that their community language will not make them "retarded," he simultaneously encourages them to learn English so that they can get out of the "ghetto."

In these examples, there is a clear distinction between the function of English and Spanish in the school context—to the extent that the linguistic features of the larger community are seen as negatively impacting academic progress. Not only are the Milagros students already well aware of their socioeconomic situation, statements like these clearly communicate the actual perceptions surrounding the value of their home language. Since Spanish is automatically related to the students' cultural background, the continuous discrediting of the community

takes a toll on their sense of identity.

Being constantly bombarded with messages imbued with socially promoted ideologies concerning social class and economic success, language-minority students have very clear views on the function of English. Students automatically associate English with achievement and financial rewards. When asked why it is important to know English, Mercedes (8th grade) emphasized the connection between English and employment:

1. **Eric**: ¿Por qué es importante saber inglés?
   [Why is it important to know English?]
2. **Mercedes**: Ya cuando crezca y necesite trabajar.
   [For when I grow up and need to work.]
3. **Eric**: Para trabajar…¿nada más?
   [Just for work...nothing else?]
4. **Mercedes**: No.

Many students, like Mercedes, view English merely as a tool, something they will need to get a job. On one level, English is also related to broader goals of achievement and success stemming from employment; yet, on the more immediate level, academic struggles cause many students to feel ambivalent about English. While it is seen as a key to financial success, language-minority students also experience English as an impenetrable interface between them and academic achievement.

Stemming from the perception of economic achievement, many recently arrived immigrant students depicted English as a vehicle for transforming their lives. Javier (6th grade) explained that learning English is necessary "Para que te superes en la vida, y así puedes ayudar a la familia" *[So you can improve your position in life, and that way you can help your family]*. By seeing English as a means to elevate his family's situation, it now has a greater purpose than just financial security. Similarly, Liliana (6th grade) described being motivated to learn English "Para tener un mejor futuro" *[To have a better future]*. Clearly, Javier and Liliana see the function of English as something that will improve their lives by providing access to resources and the opportunity to get a well paying job.

Associating English with achievement has a direct effect on the way Spanish is perceived. In many cases, being a monolingual speaker of Spanish is inherently couched in terms of impeding social advancement. As a balanced bilingual, Eva (7th grade) readily admitted that English is important "because I have opportunities to be a like, become a better person. Like my parents don't know English, and by me knowing English, I could have a better job." Regrettably, equating English proficiency with becoming a "better person" implies that those who only speak Spanish are somehow inferior. In this particular situation, Eva was quick to point to her parents as handicapped by not knowing English.

While it could be suggested that Eva's ideological orientation stems from broader forces originating outside of the classroom, the point is that those larger forces are reinforced and perpetuated by education policies like Proposition 203. Language-minority students are so affected by their experiences in the classroom that Spanish and English are frequently

portrayed in hierarchical terms. In a (verbatim) journal entry, Javier (7th grade) narrated his views toward English and Spanish in terms of life chances:

> My brother…is lokey [lucky] because he was born in the U.S.A. and I was born in Mexico. My life [here] was hard I couldn't do my work in English but I tried. If my brother, Aldo was to go only on English schools I think he would have a better life then me.

Javier depicts being born in Mexico and doing work in Spanish as detrimental. Javier's suffering in the classroom context has molded his language ideology such that he aspires for his brother to attend schools where only English is spoken so that he will have a better life. Again, English is associated with "better" as compared to Spanish. Whether English implies being a "better person" or having a "better life," Spanish is implicated as the opposite of "better." Undoubtedly, this philosophy will more than likely be imparted to Javier's brother as he grows up.

While superiority of English suffused discussions surrounding economic and academic success, Spanish became emblematic of cultural pride when the conversations involved family, community, immigration, and Mexico. When asked why it is important to know Spanish, language-minority students expressed a deep sense of connection to their cultural backgrounds. The strongest sentiments involve the relationship between language and family. Jorge (7th grade) asserted that Spanish was significant to him because "it's the language of our culture, from our background, and because that's what my family speaks." Spanish functions as a link to the students' community and history, allowing them access to their families and broader social networks.

While this was the most common response, a few students described the connection between Spanish and their cultural background as an integral part of who they are as individuals. Liliana (6th grade) avowed the personal value of Spanish, "Porque casi toda mi familia lo habla, y si no yo lo hablara, me sintiera diferente" *[Because almost all of my family speaks it, and if I didn't speak it, I would feel different].* These eloquent responses accentuate the ingrained emotional significance that Spanish has for language-minority students. Liliana's conclusion illustrates that losing that connection to family and culture transforms students into different people. While most Americans (as well as newly arrived immigrants) might see language shift as a natural step in the process of immigration and acculturation, these commentaries epitomize the true cost of losing a language.

The connection between language and cultural affiliation also surfaces in broader reflections on race and power. Students periodically mentioned aspirations of getting jobs perceived as powerful and prestigious. When I asked Marta (8th grade) how she planned on using Spanish in her future career, she emphatically declared, "Like, if one day I become a lawyer or a doctor, I could help my people…because some people are racist around here so I would help them." Marta's comments not only resonate with compassion for Spanish speakers, they point to her heightened awareness of the oppression facing Latino immigrants. From this perspective, Spanish functions as an instrument to contest social inequities. Marta's ideology of function might prioritize English for achieving academically and professionally, but she

views Spanish as important for confronting the overall sociocultural subordination felt by Latinos.

4.2 Ideologies of Form

As described above, ideologies of form cause people to perceive certain dialects and language abilities as substandard, even detrimental. These perceptions are particularly acute for language-minority students when being evaluated by educators. Students without access to the language of instruction are alienated and singled out from day one when they attend schools bound to submersion-based policies. Considering that over 90% of the students in the Milagros schools come from Spanish speaking households, it is fair to say that Proposition 203 has had an enormous impact on the students' forms of language. In the Milagros schools, the educators' ideologies of form focused on two areas: literacy-based skills and oral abilities.

The most apparent effect of disallowing native language support is seen in the students' difficulties with academic literacy skills. When native-language abilities are not developed and used to scaffold English literacy skills, language-minority students are often caught within an exasperating process of constant catch-up. This situation is exacerbated as students acquire high levels of oral proficiency in English but continue to struggle with skills surrounding their "second-language instructional competence" (Rolstad & MacSwan, 2008). Educators repeatedly expressed frustration with their students' low levels of achievement without questioning the policies dictating the development of second-language literacy programs. This trend has resulted in deeply entrenched views about language and literacy abilities. Below, Mr. Walker's (7th grade teacher) account reflects the ways in which second language oral abilities are negatively conflated with English literacy skills:

1. **Mr. Walker**: I would say…if the kid can't speak more than a few sentences, I would say that would be ELL. Some of these kids that they classify as ELL can speak English better than you.
2. **Eric**: Is that the same with speaking and reading?
3. **Mr. Walker**: It's hard to say about the reading because so many of these kids, they've been here all their lives, can't read. They read at a third or fourth grade level, and that's about average for these kids, second, third, fourth, they're way behind in reading and English grammar.

Interestingly, Mr. Walker openly admits that *so many* of his students struggle with literacy skills but downplays their ELL classification. One result of this type of viewpoint is a gross underestimation of the students' true potential, ultimately placing the burden of underachievement entirely on the students. Even though the Milagros students are involved in an array of meaningful literacy practices on a daily basis (e.g., using computers, text messaging, reading magazines and newspapers, writing poetry and song lyrics, exchanging notes with friends, and creating novel graffiti art), the overall lack of achievement on standardized literacy assessments has produced a negative view of their inherent capabilities—thus, further devaluing the forms of literacy that are most prevalent among the students (Johnson, forthcoming).

Another result of these ingrained views of language forms is manifested in the larger programmatic discourse that shapes curriculum design and class activities. As Mr. Powers (6th grade teacher) explained, "administrators tell you they're [the students] whatever real low, but they don't say okay, here's what you got to do to help them." Administrators impose this hierarchical classification of students on teachers, who then incorporate it into their classroom practices. This general view of "high" versus "low" language skills ultimately translates into perceptions about cognitive ability. Ms. Lang (3rd grade teacher) noted that her ELL students' biggest challenge includes "still trying to communicate in an upper language type level…I expect them to use the vocabulary that I give them, or you know, higher order thinking." Ms. Lang is an effective teacher and very popular with her students, but equating "higher order thinking" with communicating in an "upper language level" (i.e., English) is the type of misperception that generates tension between educators and language-minority students.

The overall deficit orientation toward the students' literacy abilities was also evident in the way the educators described the students' oral language abilities. When oral English skills were mentioned, many educators pointed out the interference of "slang." With the prevalence of code-switching in the Milagros schools, many educators openly described their students' "slang" in prescriptive terms. As Ms. McDonald (physical education teacher) suggested, "I don't think it's the correct slang either. I think they're making up their own language." Not only are academic language skills scrutinized, this example demonstrates how language forms such as "slang" are even assessed as good or bad. Considering this perception of language abilities, it is easy to see how students are quickly labeled and leveled according to standardized assessments that stress decontextualized, prescriptive applications of English.

In addition to the implicit evaluations of English abilities, some teachers were quick to point out flaws in the students' native-language competencies—even though the vast majority of educators in the Milagros do not speak Spanish. One administrator explained that her students come from villages that use "informal" Spanish, so they struggle to understand "proper" Spanish. This view of some dialects being inferior was also extended to the Spanish spoken in the community such that even when the students' bilingual abilities are acknowledged, teachers frequently assigned a prestige value to the students' dialect. Mr. Walker (7th grade teacher) reported that he supports his students by encouraging them to use their bilingual skills. Building on this point, he commented to me that "I try to tell these kids that they're extremely lucky that they're bilingual, [but] I tell these guys you can know street Spanish, but you're not going to get a decent job." Here, an idealized notion of bilingualism is posited as beneficial, but the "street Spanish" spoken by the students is juxtaposed as worthless.

It is easy to see how students might develop a complex of inferiority surrounding their "street Spanish," especially when academic literacy skills are not provided in the Milagros schools. The environment of academic underachievement facilitated by Proposition 203 has structured an overarching orientation of language-as-a-problem (Ruiz, 1984) amongst the educators in the Milagros schools. The viewpoints articulated in this section illustrate how the resulting ideologies of form shape the ways in which educators view their students and language in general. While sentiments indicating the inferiority of particular forms of language originate

from multiple sources, having them reinforced by educators on a daily basis has an especially impactful influence on the students.

In spite of their wealth of linguistic resources, language-minority students in the Milagros schools are forced to negotiate an education system that simultaneously prioritizes one particular set of skills and disallows another. Listening to how students describe their own language abilities is revelatory of the immense pressure they are under to master English. This elevated social and academic emphasis on English has caused many of the Milagros students to underestimate—and devalue—their Spanish proficiency. Derogatory views of the students' native-language are so common that many students readily discount their Spanish abilities altogether.   In many instances, students reported that they "did not speak Spanish" or that they had "forgotten" it.

When asked about her language patterns, Carla (7th grade) explained that she used to be able to speak Spanish, but she stopped speaking it ever since her father past away a few years ago. Due to the loss of her father, Carla did not associate Spanish as an everyday part of her life—to such an extent that she perceived her Spanish abilities as lost, contending that she did not "know it" anymore. Yet, having assisted in her language arts class for an entire year, I witnessed her communicate effortlessly in Spanish with her friends on multiple occasions. This type of practice versus perception dichotomy is common among students who think that forgetting words in Spanish—and/or using a lot of English nouns—equates to losing their language abilities. After spending multiple years in the US, the students' anxiety towards Spanish can be described as more of a result of feeling disconnected from Mexico. As Fabi (6th grade) explained, "forgetting" Spanish is viewed as losing her culture:

> I'm starting to forget Spanish because I'm using a lot of English, and I don't want to do that. I don't want to. I want to keep on like, I know how to write español y sé escribir en inglés y sé leer en español, pero no quiero olvidar mi culture.
>
> *[I'm starting to forget Spanish because I'm using a lot of English, and I don't want to do that, I don't want to. I want to keep on like, I know how to write Spanish and I know how to write in English and know how to read in Spanish, but I don't want to forget my culture.]*

Unfortunately, instead of realizing that she fluently uses Spanish in culturally appropriate contexts, and speaks English very well when necessary, she focused on code-switching as a sign that she is losing her culture—even though code-switching is a rule-governed and natural process that indicates fluid access to multiple languages (Sayer, 2008).

As outlined here, ideologies of form have established a consistent narrative about language abilities among students and educators in the Milagros schools. Even though this is usually realized in terms of right/wrong, good/bad, formal/informal, and practiced/forgotten, the overarching view of language competency is framed within an English/Spanish hierarchy. When Spanish is a student's only language, learning English is viewed as the pathway to success. When students speak both English and Spanish, dialect variation is cast in terms of impurity and blamed for academic and social underachievement. In both cases, an ethos of linguistic superiority and inferiority perpetuates ideologies of form throughout the Milagros

schools.

5. Conclusions

The overall legal and social dominance of English in the United States demonstrates that there exists an overriding ideology that maintains a linguistic hierarchy; in few places is this more evident than in areas like Arizona where multilingualism abounds. Linking social interactions to state policies, Gal (1998) argues that the notion of language ideology "can be understood both as a verbalized, thematized discussion and as the implicit understandings and unspoken assumptions embedded and reproduced in the structure of institutions and their everyday practices" (p. 319). Paralleling Gal's account, this paper has touched on language ideologies in three ways. First, the superordination of English is maintained through heavy-handed language policies like Proposition 203 that are intimately tied to larger social forces aimed at maintaining dominant-class cultural norms. Second, the process involved in the generation and perpetuation of language ideologies within an institutional context is readily apparent in descriptions of language use provided by educators and students. Third, the assumptions embedded in these descriptions are commonly realized through distinct ideologies of function and form.

This discussion exposes how ideologies of function and form are constantly reinforced by an underlying language ideology of English superiority—simultaneously contributing to its reproduction and proliferation. Additionally, looking at macro-level ideologies in terms of the sites where micro-level ideologies are enacted sheds light on the process by which children develop their own personal language ideologies. Even though questions have been raised concerning presence of distinct language ideologies in children (Gonzalez, 2003; Martínez-Roldán & Malavé, 2004), the testimonies presented in this argument exemplify the magnitude of impact that schools and educators have on the formation of the ideologies of young language-minority students.

While Proposition 203 alone did not produce the specific ideologies of function and form outlined here, I contend that it is responsible for structuring the educational contexts in which the educators and students develop and advance these ideologies. I have attempted to demonstrate that viewing social beliefs, language policies, and schools in terms of language ideologies offers a clearer understanding of the forces that contribute to academic (under)achievement. In this discussion, I have highlighted language ideologies of function and form as a way to instantiate such complex processes and provide a platform for recognizing how Proposition 203 has affected the beliefs of both educators and students.

The implications of this approach are multiple. As students and educators continue to be constrained by Proposition 203, providing clear examples of how their viewpoints are shaped by anti-bilingual language policies can create a space for reevaluating their actual implementation. Unveiling inherently pejorative perceptions toward language-minority students can help inherently good educators better understand their contribution to the perpetuation of the deficit view that circumscribes schools like those in the Milagros district. Also, underscoring the perceived versus actual value of the students' language abilities illuminates the wealth of linguistic resources that is occluded by Proposition 203. Providing

educators with a clearer view of how language use is driven by social perceptions of minority groups can help to alleviate the academic hierarchies ascribed to students. Finally, recognizing the link between language ideologies and academic (under)achievement establishes a platform for exploring similar social contexts where more transformative teaching is occurring. A closer examination of the language ideologies of function and form of educators and students in a more academically successful situation might suggest strategies for confronting the practices encouraged by Proposition 203 in the Milagros schools.

Language-minority students are uniquely situated within a web of requirements, obligations, classifications, and aspirations that mold their understanding of language use. Buttressing this web of influences are policies that determine which cultural assets are valued and those which are not. While students and educators might not be aware of the actual effects of language policies like Proposition 203, the way in which they communicate their personal beliefs about language exposes the types of ideological underpinnings that reinforce and promote such policies. The seemingly innocuous viewpoints expressed by the educators and students in this discussion actually constitute evidence of how coercive language ideologies are "articulated as an expression of discursive power by dominant groups with the intent of eradicating, or at least curtailing, manifestations of linguistic diversity" (Cummins, 2000, p. ix). Sadly, until the inherent inequities of English-only policies are exposed—and comprehended—on a broader social level, schools will persist as vehicles to (re)produce linguistic hierarchies structured to subordinate minority languages and their speakers.

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