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Researching and teaching (with) the continua of biliteracy

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Abstract: The continua of biliteracy model offers an ecological framework to situate research, teaching, and language policy in multilingual settings. Biliteracy is understood as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” and the continua as complex, fluid, and interrelated dimensions of communicative repertoires; it is in the dynamic, rapidly changing and sometimes contested spaces along and across the continua that biliteracy use and learning occur. Formulated in the 1980s in the context of a multi-year, comparative ethnography of language policy in two Philadelphia public schools and communities, the model has served in the years since as heuristic in research, teaching, and program development locally, nationally, and internationally in Indigenous, immigrant, diaspora and decolonizing language education contexts. It has evolved and adapted to accommodate both a changing world and a changing scholarly terrain, foregrounding ethnographic monitoring, mapping, ideological and implementational spaces, voice, and translanguaging, antiracist and decolonial pedagogies in multilingual education policy and practice. I trace this trajectory, highlighting experiences in immigrant contexts of Philadelphia and Indigenous contexts of South Africa, Sweden, and Peru where the continua of biliteracy have informed bilingual program development and Indigenous and second language teaching.

Keywords: ethnography of language policy, ideological and implementational spaces, Indigenous language education, translanguaging

1 The continua of biliteracy and how it grew¹

The Continua of Biliteracy (CoBi) framework is useful in research and teaching as well as curriculum, program and policy development in multilingual

¹ Before I start, I want to thank the many visionary and dedicated scholars, colleagues, students, and language activists whose work plays a part in this story – some are named in the paragraphs

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classrooms, schools, higher education institutions and also out-of-school contexts. Importantly, it serves as a guide in the quest for greater social justice and equity in those endeavors. This article explores the origins of CoBi, some of the ways the framework has been used and how it has evolved through use.²

The story begins in Philadelphia in the 1980s, informed also by my prior decade in the Andes working with Quechua communities, and moves over time to other continents and sites of Indigenous language revitalization, Immigrant/refugee/heritage language education, diaspora and linguistic borderlands, postcolonial and decolonizing contexts, mostly in the global South and far North. It is a story of decades and dialogues across the continua framework and other conceptual tools embedded in it or emergent in the field over time. In the 1990s, the ecology of language and voice in dialogue with CoBi were helpful in illuminating constraints and possibilities of bilingual education reforms and Indigenous teacher education in Bolivia, Peru, and the Brazilian Amazon. Further on, the ethnography of language policy enabled insights into implementational/ideological spaces for multilingualism and biliteracy opened up by Māori immersion in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Guaraní bilingual education in Paraguay and South Africa's post-apartheid multilingual language policies in the 2000s. The 2010s brought ethnographic monitoring and the mapping of CoBi in Sámi education in the global Far North and in the teaching of Spanish as L2 (second language) in Kichwa communities of the Peruvian Amazon in the Global South. Stronger advocacies for biliteracy, and for CoBi as a tool for a more just and richly multilingual-multicultural-multiliterate-multimodal education in e.g. immigrant and refugee communities in Europe, the US Latino diaspora and multilingual South African higher education, arose in the 2010s and intensify in

that follow, many are not. I am very aware of the many shoulders my work stands on. I am greatly indebted to each one and cannot adequately acknowledge all of them.

Earlier versions of this article were presented as invited talks at University of Hamburg's Language Education and Multilingualism Research Cluster, Temple University's TESOL Speaker Series in Philadelphia, University of British Columbia's Department of Language and Literacy Education in Vancouver, Penn GSE's Educational Linguistics Proseminar in Philadelphia, University of Oslo's MultiLing, IX Congreso Internacional de Psicología y Educación in Logroño, Spain, Universidad del Valle and Universidad del Quindío in Colombia, University of Indiana-Bloomington, and in Sweden at the Translanguaging in the Individual, at School and in Society conference at Linneaus University, the University of Stockholm's SEMLA Seminar (virtual), and the 14th National Conference for The Theory and Practice of Teaching and Learning Swedish (SMDI 14) at Malmö University (virtual). I am deeply grateful for all these opportunities to share my work and benefited greatly from dialogue with colleagues and students who attended.

2 Thanks to Professor Bassey Antia at University of Western Cape for the nickname CoBi.

the current decade with its resounding calls for decolonialist and antiracist pedagogies in the wake of the 2020 global pandemic.

2 CoBi and Philadelphia's minoritized language communities in the 1980s

The continua of biliteracy (CoBi) model was formulated in the context of a multi-year, comparative ethnography of language policy beginning in 1987 in Philadelphia in two public schools and their respective communities. Through participant observation, interviewing, and document collection in and out of school in the Puerto Rican community of North Philadelphia and the Cambodian community of West Philadelphia, my Educational Linguistics graduate students and I sought to understand how national, state, and local policies and programs were situated, interpreted and appropriated in language and literacy attitudes and practices in classroom and community. This study built in many ways on the comparative ethnography of bilingual education policy I had carried out in the early 1980s in two Quechua communities of Puno, Peru (Hornberger 1988). In this new team ethnography in Philadelphia, the continua framework proved useful in analyzing data and drawing conclusions from our collaborative ethnographic research; and by the same token, the ongoing research informed the evolving framework.

A review of research literature on bilingualism and literacy at the time led to thinking about what we were looking at as biliteracy – which I defined as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more) languages in or around writing” (Hornberger 1990: 213; taking inspiration from Heath's 1982 literacy event). The emphasis on interaction and interpretation around writing contrasts with definitions that take biliteracy more narrowly to mean (mastery of) reading (and writing) in two languages (or in a second language). The emphasis on instances of biliteracy is multiscalar, including communicative events but also actors, interactions, practices, activities, programs, sites, situations, societies, and worlds.

The literature revealed that dimensions commonly characterized by scholars, practitioners and policymakers as polar opposites, such as first versus second languages (L1 vs. L2), monolingual versus bilingual individuals, or oral versus literate societies, turn out under scrutiny of research to be only theoretical endpoints on what are in reality fluid and dynamic continua of language and literacy use – something that teachers of bilingual and multilingual learners have long been aware of in daily practice, but also somewhat worried about due to being

told they shouldn't mix the languages, a dilemma I also experienced in my own early student teaching experience in a bilingual classroom of New York City's P.S. 20 Anna Silver School.

Crucially, the continua of biliteracy framework posits and depends on a dynamic and fluid understanding of communicative repertoire and the multi-dimensional aspects one needs to take into account in creating learning environments that recognize and build on those repertoires. My understanding of communicative repertoire goes back to sociolinguists' early recognition of verbal repertoire as "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the community in the course of socially significant interaction" (Gumperz 1971: 184), and the "range of varieties of language, the circumstances, purposes, and meanings of their use" by individuals and communities (Hymes 1980: 106); and concords with recent sociolinguists' understandings of communicative repertoire as explicitly encompassing the collection of linguistic, communicative and semiotic resources people deploy to communicate and function in their multiple communities, including for example speech accents and language registers, modalities as well as gestures, posture and even ideologies (Blommaert 2010; Rymes 2010).

These foundational notions – of biliteracy as interpretation and interaction around writing in two or more languages and of fluid and dynamic continua making up communicative repertoires – are the building blocks for the continua model of biliteracy. I grouped the continua into three-dimensional sets bringing into focus the dimensions involved in creating learning environments (contexts) that recognize and build on (develop) students' language and literacy repertoires (media) and the meanings and identities expressed therein (content). The model's intersecting and nested continua thus represent the multiple, complex, and fluid interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy and of the contexts, media, and content through which biliteracy develops (Hornberger 1989, 2003).

Our research showed how *biliteracy contexts* for Puerto Rican and Cambodian students in 1980s Philadelphia were framed and constrained by national policies emphasizing English acquisition at the expense of minority language maintenance, by an educational system using minority languages only to embed more powerful English literacy, and by the assimilative "charm" of English pulling students' biliterate development toward English (Hornberger 1992). Regarding *biliteracy media*, specifically Spanish and English, faculty and staff in schools serving the Puerto Rican community continually faced challenging decisions about placing students in English-dominant or Spanish-dominant streams, about distribution of English and Spanish in program structure and classroom, and about instruction and assessment in coexisting standard and non-standard varieties of English and Spanish (Hornberger and Micheau 1993).

Biliteracy development in adult education programs for Puerto Ricans and Cambodians revealed the inadequacy of skills-based views of literacy emphasizing single, standardized schooled literacy in L2 versus the benefits of cultural practice views (Hornberger and Hardman 1994). It was Ellen Skilton-Sylvester's spinoff dissertation research on literacy, identity and educational policy among Cambodian women and girls that led to expansion from the original nine continua of context, media, development to include three more continua of *biliteracy content* to account for identities and meanings expressed through biliterate practices and the important role of contextualized, vernacular, minority/ized texts in women's and girls' biliteracy (Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester 2000; Skilton-Sylvester 1997, 2002, 2003).

In one Philadelphia study from the 1980s, I spent a year in two 4th-grade classrooms – one bilingual, one English-only – and was surprised to find how successful the English-only teacher seemed to be with her Cambodian students. Seeking to understand what was going on, I analyzed the data in terms of four themes drawn from literacy research – motivation, purpose, text, and interaction, identifying how the two teachers created (in similar and different ways) what I suggested were successful contexts for biliteracy. Emergent categories through which I analyzed similarities and differences across the two teachers were: attention to and accountability of each individual (motivation), clear task-definition and task-focused correction including teacher's acknowledgement of her own mistakes (purpose), exposure to a variety of genres (text), and signaling understanding, analyzing features, reasoning (interaction) (Hornberger 1990).

For example, both teachers created a strong sense of motivation in the children to do well, but the bilingual teacher drew on her shared linguistic and cultural background to create a sense of community with the children, while the English-only teacher did not have that option and yet found ways to create a sense of classroom community to motivate the children. From this as well as my analysis of purpose, text, and interaction, I concluded that when seen through the continua of biliteracy, one explanation for success of the English-only teacher of Cambodian children despite not using the students' first language as medium of instruction might lie in the interconnectedness of the continua – a particularly rich environment along one or two of the development continua makes up for poverty along another; in this case the missing L1 on the L1–L2 continuum was compensated for by the teacher's multiple strategies for creating an extremely rich written-oral and productive-receptive context (Hornberger 1990).

It was becoming clear from the research that the continua are interrelated dimensions of highly complex and fluid communicative repertoires; and it is in the dynamic, rapidly changing and sometimes contested spaces along and across the continua that biliteracy use and learning occur. I posited that the more

bi/multilingual students’ contexts of language and literacy use allow them to draw from across the whole of each and every continuum, the greater are the chances for their full language and literacy development and expression (Hornberger 1989).

When Ellen Skilton-Sylvester and I revisited the continua of biliteracy in 2000, we found there was an implicit argument in the 1989 paper that there has in fact not been attention to all points, and that educators – and society as a whole – need to work directly to counteract that. We laid this out in a figure depicting all twelve continua in one possible – and frequent – power weighting in educational systems around the world. We argued explicitly that there is a need to contest traditional power weighting [along the continua] by paying attention to, granting agency to, and making space for actors and practices at what have traditionally been less powerful ends of the continua (Figure 1, adapted from Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester 2000: 99).

Continuing ethnographic research in Philadelphia schools by my graduate students into the 2000s yielded fine-grained analyses of curricular adaptations

Figure 1: Power relations in the continua of biliteracy (adapted from Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester 2000: 99).

and culturally contextualized teaching strategies in bilingual classrooms, including: how, why, for what purposes, and in which varieties educators might or might not correct Latinx student “errors” in use of bilingual oral and literacy norms as they developed standard monolingual Spanish and English literacy skills in a bilingual middle school classroom (Cahnmann 2003); and how two elementary school bilingual education teachers creatively adapted mandated and scripted curricula by drawing on linguistic, cultural, and textual resources to ensure comprehensible instruction, inclusion of community funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992) and students’ bilingual/biliterate development (Schwinge 2003).

Meanwhile, I was also using CoBi in my ongoing teaching and mentoring in Educational Linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (Penn GSE), and tried to capture some of the ways I found it useful, using vignettes exploring dilemmas confronting language educators and how the continua framework might shape a response, namely: global/local trends and biliteracy contexts, standard/nonstandard repertoires and biliteracy media, language/content assessment and biliteracy development, and language/culture/identity and biliteracy content (Hornberger 2004).

I continue to use CoBi as the main framework in my Language Diversity and Education course, where we explore “the wide range of issues affecting educational policy and classroom practice in multilingual, multimodal, multicultural settings.” Focusing on selected US and international cases, we begin at the macro level, looking at policy contexts and program structures, and move to the micro level to consider teaching and learning in the multilingual classroom. Throughout, we consider how discourses, ideologies and identities are interwoven in multilingual education policy and practice. We conclude with attention to the roles of teachers, researchers, and communities in implementing change in schools.³

3 Voice, biliteracy and CoBi as ecological heuristic in Indigenous education in the 1990s

Beyond Philadelphia, colleagues and I have taken up CoBi as a heuristic for research, teaching, teacher education and curriculum and program development

3 I am grateful to generations of Penn GSE Educational Linguistics students and colleagues for the many ways they have supported and participated in this research and for being my academic home and community for the past 35 years (see Hornberger 2001, forthcoming) for retrospective and prospective accounts of Educational Linguistics at its 25th anniversary and approaching its 50th, respectively).

in Indigenous and decolonizing education. In the 1990s, I spent two-weeks at an annual Indigenous teacher education course in the Amazonian rainforest, sponsored by the *Comissão Pró-Índio do Acre*, Brazil, that impressed me deeply for: its rainforest site, the Indigenous teachers' dual roles as learners and teachers-in-form, the robust reflexive practice and interdisciplinarity of the program, the daily practice of multimodal interlingual communication by which participants from multiple Amazonian languages engaged in their learning, and the teachers' development of teaching materials reflective of local Indigenous culture, history, and artistic expression, including, e.g. Kashinawá geometric drawings (Menezes de Souza 2005). It was an experience which started me thinking more expansively about the multimodality of the media of biliteracy as instantiated in the teachers' daily communicative and pedagogical practices. Perhaps, too, it was not purely coincidental that the ecology metaphor became salient to me at this time, having spent an intense few weeks in the fragile Amazonian ecology among this current generation of its long-time custodians (Hornberger 1998; see also Cavalcanti and Maher 2018 for comprehensive updates on Brazilian multilingualism).

This experience and others in Peru, Bolivia, South Africa, and Paraguay, all of which saw dramatic new multilingual language policies in those years (see below), convinced me that in an ecology of languages where Indigenous languages and speakers have been marginalized for centuries in post-colonial contexts, bilingual intercultural education can become a vehicle for promoting language equality and language rights, and that the continua of biliteracy can be useful in this endeavor, because of its ecological perspective, encompassing themes of evolution, environment, and endangerment. CoBi assumes one language and literacy develops in relation to one or more other languages and literacies (language evolution), situates biliteracy development – whether in the individual, classroom, community, or society – in relation to the contexts, media, and content in and through which it develops (language environment), and provides a heuristic for addressing unequal balance of power across languages and literacies (for both studying and counteracting language endangerment) (Hornberger 2002, 2003).

In the Bolivian Andes, I had the opportunity to observe Indigenous Quechua-speaking children thriving in schools implementing bilingual intercultural education in Quechua and Spanish several years into the sweeping 1994 National Educational Reform in a nation where Indigenous-language speakers make up 63% of the population, and indeed where current policy proclaims the Bolivian nation to be plurinational (López 2020). The 1994 Reform aimed to introduce bilingual intercultural education nationwide, making space for all thirty of Bolivia's Indigenous languages alongside Spanish as subjects and media of

instruction in all schools, in a comprehensive and multi-faceted reform including also popular participation in school leadership and the introduction of constructivist pedagogies. Teaching and learning modules were developed by native speakers for all the languages. Those for Quechua and Aymara drew on the experience of the 1980s Puno experimental bilingual education project (PEEB) where I had carried out my two-year ethnographic dissertation research (Hornberger 1988), while those for Guarani drew on the experience gained in a successful participatory literacy campaign carried out in 1992–1993 (López 1996).

A key provision of the Bolivian Education Reform was establishment of a library in every primary classroom of the nation, each stocked with a collection of 80 books provided by the Ministry of Education through UNESCO auspices. Included were six Big Books in Spanish – three based on oral traditions in Quechua, Aymara, Guarani.⁴ Approximately 18 inches by 24 inches with large print text and colorful illustrations, the Big Book could be seen by the whole class when held up in front. We visited Prof Berta's classroom one morning, which had a library corner housing a small collection including a couple of Big Books; she called on a child to come to the front to read aloud to his classmates. Later, when the class left for recess, a couple of children noticed my interest in the Big Books and came over to gleefully hold them up for a photo (fieldnote, 14 August 2000, Kayarani).

The use of Big Books written in Spanish but telling stories from Indigenous oral traditions was striking to me, particularly in light of the children's gleeful delight in the colorful books. This was perhaps a case of biliteracy content making space for the children's self-authoring drawing on languages and cultural genres of others. Here, I availed myself of Holland and Lave's (2001) interpretation of four Bakhtinian themes around voice which in turn inspired me to look back at my glimpses of Peru's Puno PEEB of the 1980s, of Paraguay's Guarani inclusion in school curriculum in the 2000s, and of Aotearoa/New Zealand's Māori immersion education across multiple decades, exploring how tensions along the continua of biliteracy in each case might illustrate the other three Bakhtinian themes highlighted by Holland and Lave: the individual in active dialogue with their environment, widely circulating discourses that animate processes of dialogism and self-authoring, and an active stance toward others and the dialects, languages, genres, and cultural forms they produce (Hornberger 2006b).

It is not merely use of the minoritized language in each case that animates voice. Indeed, the relationship between voice and use of the minoritized language is a complex one, as Ruiz captured well in this quote:

4 *El Zorro, el Puma y los Otros; La Oveja y el Zorro; La Chiva Desobediente.*

As much as language and voice are related, it is also important to distinguish between them. I have become convinced of the need for this distinction through a consideration of instances of language planning in which the ‘inclusion’ of the language of a group has coincided with the exclusion of their voice ... Language is general, abstract, subject to a somewhat arbitrary normalization; voice is particular and concrete. Language has a life of its own – it exists even when it is suppressed; when voice is suppressed, it is not heard – it does not exist. To deny people their language ... is, to be sure, to deny them voice; but, to allow them “their” language ... is not necessarily to allow them voice. (Ruiz 1997: 320–321)

Yet, even if not all Indigenous or other language minority/ized children find voice through use of their own or heritage language as medium of instruction, many of them do and when they do, it is perhaps because of the ways that biliterate use of their language alongside the dominant language mediates the dialogism, meaning-making, access to wider discourses, and taking of an active stance that are dimensions of voice. Minority/ized voices thus activated can be a powerful force for enhancing the children’s own learning and promoting maintenance and revitalization of their languages (Hornberger 2006b).

4 Ideological/implementational spaces for CoBi: ethnography of LPP in post-apartheid South Africa in the 2000s

Multilingual language policies that were burgeoning in the 1990s and 2000s opened up ideological and implementational spaces in the ecology for as many languages as possible, and in particular endangered languages, to evolve and flourish rather than dwindle and disappear. I started to argue that we educators, researchers, and language users need to fill those ideological and implementational spaces (Hornberger 2002: 30; Hornberger 2005; 2006a; 2021). For example, I collaborated with colleagues in post-apartheid South Africa who exploited the ideological/implementational spaces opened up by the official recognition of nine African languages in the new Constitution of 1993, explicitly using the continua of biliteracy (CoBi) to structure pedagogical practices and program development.

One was the Battswood Primary School in Cape Town, where Neville Alexander and Carole Bloch, along with others at PRAESA (Program for Alternative Education in South Africa), were working to develop, try out and demonstrate workable strategies for teaching and learning with an additive bilingual approach at a formerly coloured Afrikaans/English dual medium school where, after apartheid, Xhosa-speaking children were arriving from townships in search of a better education than their parents had experienced

under apartheid. The PRAESA team included Carole, an early literacy specialist, and a Xhosa-speaking teacher, Ntombi, working with resident Battswood teacher Erica in Grades 1–3.

This multilingual teaching team saw themselves as working at the less powerful micro, oral, multilingual ends of CoBi to challenge power relations at the macro, literate, monolingual English ends (Bloch and Alexander 2003; Bloch et al. 2010). They placed strong emphasis on oral and literate development of Xhosa, for example, through the use of multilingual songs and rhymes with the whole class in Grade 1, fostering oral, receptive, L1 development; and in Grade 3, interactive writing through dialogue journals and letter writing in Xhosa, fostering vernacular, contextualized, minoritized content.

Continuing PRAESA endeavors in the next decades included the *Little Books for Little Hands Stories Across Africa*⁵ early literacy initiative and the Saturday Reading Clubs in the townships. I was invited one Saturday to join the team at one of the reading clubs where Neville, Carole, Ntombi Nkence, and another PRAESA member Xolisa Guzula participated on a regular basis. There was oral storytelling, which enthralled the children. After the storytelling, children each chose a book from the array of multilingual books the PRAESA team had brought along and spent an hour or so reading in the sun-filled patio of the school, with PRAESA team members circulating to stop by and share in reading with the children in one-to-one conversations (fieldnote, 14 August 2010, Vulindlela; Alexander et al. 2011)

Another implementational/ideological space being opened up in South Africa, using CoBi as heuristic, was the highly innovative dual language Contemporary English and Multilingual Studies three-year honors undergraduate degree developed at University of Limpopo, to date South Africa's only bilingual university-level program in English and an African language, founded in 2003 by Michael Joseph and Esther Ramani in direct response to the multilingual language policy and with the explicit aim of reclaiming the power of the powerless. Joseph and Ramani turned to CoBi and to Cummins' (1982) 4-quadrants as theoretical basis for designing and implementing dual-medium curriculum and pedagogy to support students' academic biliteracy development in both English and Sepedi,⁶ one of the nine African languages officially recognized in South Africa's Constitution of 1993. In the English-medium modules, taught by founders Joseph and Ramani who are not fluent speakers of Sepedi,

⁵ <http://www.praesa.org.za/little-hands-project/>.

⁶ seSotho sa Leboa (Northern seSotho) is commonly referred to by the name of its major variety, Sepedi.

they and their students practiced a flexible multilingual or translanguaging approach in which students were encouraged to claim spaces for both spoken and written Sepedi and other local varieties alongside South African English, other Englishes, and other international languages (Hornberger 2010; Joseph and Esther 2004; Joseph and Ramani 2012).

For example, in a seminar taught by Michael Joseph, students were preparing to engage in a third-year project exploring Sepedi-speaking children's private speech in their own communities, following Vygotskian conceptual and methodological guidelines originally written in Russian, here studied and discussed with their instructor in English, and implemented in their communities in Sepedi. The students conferred among themselves in class, freely code-switching in Sepedi and English, as to which of six child language development paradigms introduced in class that week best corresponded to a short text they had just read in English (fieldnote, 5 August 2008). As Joseph later put it, the program is an instantiation of the continua of biliteracy, of the ways in which translanguaging and transnational literacy practices therein enable a kind of learning that is at once about "discovering their culture and the great ideas in the literature, one unlocking the other" (Michael Joseph, personal communication, 28 July 2009).

The above studies all pursued ethnographic research at local levels to illuminate language policy implementation and interpretation, an approach colleagues, students and I began to formulate explicitly as ethnography of language policy in the 2000s (Canagarajah 2006; Hornberger 2013, 2015; Hornberger et al. 2018; McCarty 2011). My student David Cassels Johnson and I drew on our own studies of LPP spaces for multilingual education: his ethnographic dissertation research on shifting interpretations and implementation spaces for No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy under two successive school district administrators in Philadelphia; and my ethnographic research in the PROEIB Master's Program for Professional Development in Bilingual Intercultural Education for the Andean Countries, in which I explored Indigenous educators' discourses on their developing sense of being Indigenous in PROEIB spaces such as their thesis research and an ethnography workshop I led (Hornberger 2013, 2014b). Johnson and I argued that ethnography of language policy offers a way to illuminate local interpretation and implementation of top-down language policy and planning (LPP); to expose human agency and ingenuity at the local level of implementation; to uncover indistinct voices, covert motivations, embedded ideologies, invisible instances, or unintended consequences of LPP; and to highlight opening up/closing down of implementational/ideological spaces (Hornberger and Johnson 2007, 2011).

5 Sápmi and the Amazon: ethnographic monitoring and mapping CoBi in the 2010s

In my ethnographic work in South Africa, as well as in continuing work by and with Ph.D. students on Sámi language education in Scandinavia with Hanna Outakoski, Kichwa–Spanish bilingual education in the Peruvian Amazon with Frances Kvietok-Dueñas, and Zapotec language revitalization in Oaxaca, Mexico with Haley De Korne, we began to link the ethnography of LPP to Hymes’ (1980) ethnographic monitoring proposal for evaluating U.S. bilingual education programs using ethnography in lieu of summative testing (De Korne 2021; De Korne and Hornberger 2017; Hornberger 2014a; Hornberger and Kvietok Dueñas 2019; Hornberger and Outakoski 2015). Foreseeing that bilingual education would be charged with failure based on political rather than educational grounds, in that it makes visible the unequal distribution of rights and benefits in multilingual contexts – as indeed happened and continues to happen wherever multilingual education is undertaken, Hymes pointed out that “an evaluation in terms of gross numbers can only guess at what produced the numbers” (Hymes 1980: 115) whereas if measures are to mean anything, ethnography is essential. He went on to outline three overriding purposes and activities of ethnographic monitoring: description of current communicative conduct in programs, analysis of emergent patterns and meanings in program implementation, and evaluation of program and policy in terms of social meanings, specifically with regard to countering educational inequities and advancing social justice (Hymes 1980; Van der Aa and Blommaert 2011).

I found myself doing some ethnographic monitoring in Sápmi beginning in 2012, at the generous invitation of Umeå University’s Language Studies department. On one occasion, as I sat with faculty key to the development of the department’s proposal for a Sámi language teacher education program they hoped to mount, we reviewed myriad curricular dimensions to be taken into account in designing the program, among them: 1) scarce human resources and competing institutions of Sámi language teaching, 2) dispersion of speakers and prospective teachers across hundreds of square miles in Sápmi with different varieties geographically concentrated in different areas, 3) accommodating both students learning the language and students learning to teach the language in the same course, 4) which specific Sámi varieties to include (North, South, and Lule) and 5) the feasibility of a common Sámi pedagogy across all of them (Outakoski 2013; Vinka et al. 2015). Indeed, the tensions and challenges were daunting and as I tried to share successful experiences I know of in other Indigenous contexts of the

world, I empathized with the discouragements and congratulated the faculty on their perseverance and creativity in confronting them.

A faculty research group on the Literacy in Sápmi research project led by Professor Eva Lindgren brainstormed with me about ways CoBi could be useful in analyzing their data.⁷ Data collection for this three-country study of youth literacy in North Sámi, English, and each country's respective national language, Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish, was by means of a literacy assessment in which youth who study or have studied North Sámi as a subject in school wrote texts in each of their three languages, one descriptive and one argumentative, for a total of 6 texts per youth in roughly age categories—nine, twelve, fifteen, and eighteen years old. This resulted in more than 800 texts composed by 150 youth, in five languages (North Sámi, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, and English). The richness and diversity of the data invited multiple angles of analysis for which the CoBi heuristic proved useful (Lindgren et al. 2016, 2011; Outakoski et al. 2019; Sullivan et al. 2019).

Multimodal multilingual communicative practices stood out to me as I learned about Sámi language revitalization classes taught out of the *SameTinget* 'Sami parliament' *Språkcentrum* 'Language Department' in Östersund, Sweden – ideological and implementational spaces opened up in part by legislative recognitions of Sámi rights in Sweden beginning in the 1980s and appropriated here by two language teachers appointed by the Sámi parliament, whom I visited with a colleague in 2013. In the two teachers' accounts of their Jågløe materials production, Mentor Program, and Language Barrier Project, a variety of materials and modalities emerged, including multilingual word cards for pre-schools, cooking and handcraft activities, theater and tourist office visits, and language network mapmaking with adult heritage language learners.

Yet, most memorable in their accounts was what they called the "process of tears" and the pain they found themselves working through with the elders and adults enrolled in their classes. They told us of the memories, anger, and shame their heritage learners felt for having learned NOT to speak Sámi, and of the resistance they met from their own families as they struggled to overcome their own internal "language police" (their words) to SPEAK – resistance that arose sometimes from the learners' own grown children who themselves resented not having been raised to speak Sámi. The teachers' story was a moving account of how these "passive speakers" became active speakers as they became a strong and supportive group: in the teachers' words, "they learn[ed] as a group, they [rose] as a group" (fieldnote, 28 May 2013).

⁷ Other members of the research team were Professors Kirk Sullivan and Asbjørg Westum and Ph.D. student Hanna Outakoski.

I worked with one member of the Umeå team in particular, Sámi colleague Hanna Outakoski, as she was writing up her Ph.D. thesis in which she employed the continua of biliteracy as overarching theoretical framework spanning the wide scope of her work on: the linguistic structure of North Sámi in relation to Finnish; teachers' metapragmatic statements about Sámi language use, teaching, revitalization; and youth multilingual literacy practices across their North Sámi – English – Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish languages. Acknowledging the logic of linguistic power relations and inherent power imbalance that informs the CoBi model, Hanna proposed mapping the continua for any particular North Sámi language community to identify both positive and problematic areas in literacy emergence and develop measures appropriate for rebalancing those power imbalances for language revitalization (Outakoski 2015).

Across the world, in an ethnographic monitoring experience undertaken by Educational Linguistics Ph.D. student Frances Kvietok Dueñas in the Peruvian Amazon, CoBi provided a tool to map relevant dimensions of Kichwa teachers' Spanish L2 pedagogy, and critically reflect with them on ways to shift pedagogy away from student shyness toward student voice. At the request of the CEBES (*Comunidades y Escuelas para el Bien Estar* Communities and Schools for the Good Life) school network in Alto Napo (Peruvian Amazon) which has since 2008 built and sustained community-school relationships in order to develop and implement an education by and for Indigenous peoples, Frances spent two months in 2013 working with Kichwa teachers in six schools as workshop leader with a focus on "active methodological strategies for work in Spanish as a second language" that might go beyond the culturally relevant materials already used by at least some of the Kichwa teachers in their Spanish L2 lessons. Frances and I conceptualized her role as one of ethnographic monitoring, including participant observation and interviews as well as leading professional development workshops, modeling Spanish lessons and participating in lesson planning with teachers.

Drawing on CoBi, Frances modeled and reflected with teachers on crafting pedagogies of voice through strategies such as: using vernacular genres/styles (biliteracy content), developing lessons around topics taken from everyday contexts of Kichwa use e.g. river market transactions (biliteracy context), shifting participation practices from teacher-centered to student-centered (biliteracy development), and encouraging students' critical metalinguistic awareness of their uses of Kichwa & Spanish (biliteracy media). We argued based on her experience that mapping biliteracy teaching with the teachers in this way provided a tool to uncover tensions in the teaching of majoritized languages in this Indigenous context of postcoloniality, to challenge constructs of student shyness,

and to propose pedagogies to support the flourishing of student voice (Hornberger and Kvietok Dueñas 2019).

6 Advocating for biliteracies: back to immigrant/refugee contexts in the U.S. and Europe

Coming full circle back to immigrant and refugee communities in Philadelphia, my students and I have continued to draw on CoBi, advocating for biliteracy as a tool for antiracist and decolonial pedagogies and social justice for raciolinguistically minoritized learners.⁸ Comparing ideological spaces opened up by multilingual language policies in South Africa, Sweden and elsewhere with those abruptly closed down in the United States with the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, I had suggested that in addition to ideological spaces opening implementational ones, implementational spaces can serve reciprocally as wedges to pry open ideological ones as they are being closed down by policy (Hornberger 2006a). This has become even more urgent in the current decade in the US, as spaces for multilingualism and immigration continue to close down in a context of enduring structures of racism imposed by standards-based reform, immigration restrictions and bans, and the ongoing and tragic violence against Black people and communities of color.

Holly Link and I drew on my ethnographic monitoring at University of Limpopo and on her ethnographic research in a Latino diaspora community outside Philadelphia where growing numbers of raciolinguistically minoritized Spanish-speaking, primarily Mexican origin or Mexican-heritage children have arrived in the last few decades. We analyzed the case of first grader Beatriz' fluid and dynamic communicative repertoire as she moved through the spaces and events of her day at home and at school, exploring her and other learners' translanguageing and transnational literacies in relation to CoBi and arguing for CoBi as a pedagogical resource to create new spaces in our policies and our schools, even in the face of increasingly English-only and high stakes testing policies in U.S. under NCLB. Although the sole language of instruction at Beatriz' school was English, its classrooms were becoming multilingual spaces as children from both

⁸ Here I use the term *raciolinguistically minoritized* rather than the earlier terms *language minority* or *language minoritized* in reference to linguistically and culturally diverse children/learners/families/communities that have been historically marginalized in the US and around the world. I do this in recognition of groundbreaking work by Nelson Flores and others that makes explicit the raciolinguistic ideologies underlying that marginalization (Flores 2019).

Spanish and non-Spanish speaking households spoke and were learning Spanish for a variety of functions throughout the school day (Link 2016).

Using the metaphor of lenses as a way of thinking about bringing different sets of continua into focus (along the lines of the different lenses the optometrist drops in front of your eyes, changing your focus), we considered in turn the CoBi lenses of context in terms of the sociolinguistics of globalization, content in terms of transnational literacies, media as communicative repertoire, and development via translanguaging, taken together as pedagogical resources for honing innovative programs, curricula, and practices that recognize, value, and build on the rich and varied communicative repertoires of students, their families, and communities (Hornberger and Link 2012).

In the same community, and in the context of today's deportation regime in the U.S. where millions of children live in families with undocumented immigrants, another recent Educational Linguistics Ph.D. Sarah Gallo and I looked closely at the case of second grader Princess' family's process of adjusting to major life changes with the impending deportation of her father who had been picked up by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for littering, just one of the poignant stories emerging from Gallo's three-year ethnography on Mexican immigrant fathers and their elementary school aged children (Gallo 2017). Looking through the CoBi lenses at Princess and her family revealed the unintended language education consequences of immigration policy, the complex ways that children discursively contribute to family language policy and migration decisions, how limited opportunities to develop dynamic bilingualism or biliteracy in U.S. schools shape families' decisions, and the urgent need for educational policy and classroom practices that open up ideological and implementational spaces along CoBi to better prepare children for educational success on both sides of the border (Gallo and Hornberger 2019).

In Europe's increasingly multilingual societies and classrooms filled with immigrant and refugee students, scholars draw on CoBi in research and advocacy for multilingualism in teaching and policy-making. The University of Hamburg's multi-year (2013–2020) Research Cluster on Language Education and Multilingualism, whose director Professor Ingrid Gogolin invited me to provide a keynote about Researching with CoBi at their working conference in 2017, is ongoing throughout Germany with the aim of “determin[ing] which language biographies, learning settings, language education programmes and language learning strategies have favourable or unfavourable effects on the successful development of multilingualism. Results will be used to draw recommendations for educational policy & practice.”⁹ Other recent and ongoing studies in Europe availing

⁹ <http://www.kombi-hamburg.de>.

themselves of CoBi are looking at multilingual study guidance in Swedish compulsory school (Warren 2016, 2017), collaboration with parents and multiliteracy in early childhood education (Kirsch and Aleksic 2018, 2021), translanguaging pedagogy in a superdiversity classroom (Ticheloven et al. 2019), teaching basic literacy with adult Swedish L2 speakers (Westerholm and Marrone 2016), and multilingual pupils' literacy acquisition and literary understandings of the Danish canon of literature (Kaasby and Hornberger under review).

7 2020 vision: CoBi as antiracist and decolonizing pedagogy, past and present

Today, in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic and of continuing violence against Black people and communities of color in the U.S. and around the world, there is a renewed commitment to address racism and oppression in our educational systems. Just a few months before Covid emerged onto the world stage, I had the unexpected delight of meeting Professor Bassey Antia of the University of the Western Cape and learning about his use of the continua of biliteracy, or CoBi as he named it.¹⁰

In a context of intense debate around decoloniality in South African higher education in recent years, Antia adopted CoBi as a tool for implementing decolonial pedagogy in his *Multilingualism in Education and Society* course (Antia and Dyers 2017, 2019). Antia and co-lecturer/co-author Charlyn Dyers write:

Hornberger can be read as arguing that the prospects of educational success, knowledge production, pedagogy and so on are enhanced when orthodoxies of colonial hegemony are subverted, and factors from each end of the power spectrum are allowed to interact. There is a need to challenge a more powerful colonial, Western modelling of the recipes for success in knowledge production and mediation: literacy, texts, monolingualism, writing, colonial languages, decontextualized (i.e. Western) perspectives, abstract styles, keeping distinct different varieties of languages. (Antia and Dyers 2019: 95)

Multilingualism in Education and Society is a third year course in the Department of Linguistics at UWC, enrolling about 200 students each year—speakers of

10 I thank my student Esther Liu for initiating and facilitating Professor Antia's Educational Linguistics visit and talk in September 2019 in conjunction with his speaking at The Annual Conference of the International Association for the Integrational Study of Language and Communication: "Integrationism and Philosophies of Language: Emerging Alternative Epistemologies in the Global North and Global South" convened by Sinfree Makoni at Pennsylvania State University, September 1–2, 2019. Liu had met Antia during her summer internship at UWC and wanted to be sure he and I connected.

Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, or a bilingual mix, from rural/urban contexts, many are first-generation students, from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds, poorly resourced schools and holding down work simultaneously. Reflecting on the course, Antia and Dyers found they were ironically devaluing students' multilingualism in a course celebrating multilingualism, "pathetically reinscribing and reinforcing the very values and ideology we sought to deconstruct" (Antia and Dyers 2019: 94), despite university language policy acknowledging Afrikaans and isiXhosa as official languages.

Having realized this, they set out to "de-alienate the academy for our students and ... heal some of the accruing injuries of coloniality" (Antia and Dyers 2019: 92, citing Dominguez 2017: 227). Beginning in 2013 and up to the present, they have developed new lectures, materials, and assessments for the course, availing themselves of CoBi, arguing that:

Hornberger's model creates a third space in which opposites (e.g. of earlier anthropological research) are reconciled. It allows for what has been described as dialogic pedagogy in which Western knowledge and local knowledge are used and mediated to create new and powerful knowledge as well as more rounded and grounded graduates. (Antia and Dyers 2019: 95)

In terms of applying the CoBi model toward a decolonial pedagogy, they have sought to "undermine foundations of coloniality" in the course by 1) acknowledging students' different cultural backgrounds and exposure to languages and to oral/literate knowledge acquisition practices, 2) facilitating information-processing across African home/non-home languages and across visual, aural and other modes, 3) ensuring that meanings draw on local/non-local sources and are encoded in a mix of abstract/non-abstract formulations, and 4) exposing students to learning in both informal and standardized language varieties.

Inclusion of multilingual course resources and assessments is ongoing since 2013. This includes reworking English lecture resources into formal and informal varieties of Afrikaans and isiXhosa, in both written Powerpoint slides and audio/podcast forms, accessible for registered students through the University's learning management system; it also includes multilingual assessments as of 2017. Analysis of students' reflective essays about their experience in the course points to themes reversing longstanding injuries of coloniality—by undermining English as the unquestioned *de facto* language of assessment, by recognizing and valuing (rather than denigrating) African languages, and by enabling students to access course knowledge through oral/aural modes and not only written ones.

Antia and Dyers speak of "repurposing" CoBi as a model for theorizing a decolonial pedagogy. They have, indeed, invested energy and commitment in interpreting and situating the framework in a new context. For me, this repurposing is about "renewing the purpose" that has been at the heart of CoBi from

the beginning. Founded on my own decades-long and deep-seated concerns for social justice, equity, and antiracism; framed in raciolinguistically minoritized Indigenous/immigrant/refugee research contexts; and drawing from sociolinguistics, educational linguistics, and educational anthropology—fields deeply informed by the U.S. non-violent civil rights and social justice movements, anti-war and anti-apartheid movements, I would argue that CoBi is and always has been about decolonial and antiracist pedagogies.

8 Imagining multilingual schools

The continua of biliteracy remain my foundational schema, allowing me to gauge my attention to the full gamut of issues relevant to the concerns which have always been at the core of my interest: how best to serve Indigenous/immigrant/refugee and other raciolinguistically minoritized students in our educational systems and how best to support language revitalization and well-being, social justice and equity for Indigenous/immigrant/refugee and other raciolinguistically minoritized groups in our societies.

The story of how CoBi evolved and grew as analytical heuristic for imagining just and equitable multilingual schools in contexts across the world is also a personal story looking back on my own trajectory researching and teaching with the continua of biliteracy over the past thirty or so years. To be sure, there have been ups and downs in that trajectory. More than once, I was on the verge of abandoning CoBi along the way, mostly for being too complex, too abstract, or just plain too difficult to teach others to use as heuristic. I sometimes felt I was trying to make CoBi do too many things. Or I wondered if the emergence of sister concepts like multiliteracies in the 1990s or translanguaging in the 2000s made CoBi redundant (Cazden et al. 1996; García 2007; Hornberger 2022). Yet amidst these doubts and questionings, something always brings me back to it – a student’s probing question perhaps, an inquiry from a colleague across the world who is applying it in a new context, permission to reprint the CoBi power relations figure, a request for an encyclopedia or handbook chapter, a talk, a keynote, an interview (Reyes and Hornberger 2016). I have gradually realized CoBi is no longer only mine, but belongs to many. For my part, CoBi has become my mental schema—I continually map new cases and new conceptual breakthroughs onto it.

Imagining Multilingual Schools was the inspiring title of García et al.’s (2006) book and 2004 international symposium convened at Teachers College, a motto that participants took heart from in the midst of oppressive US No Child Left Behind educational policy. I continue to engage, and encourage my students to engage,

in imagining multilingual schools. To the extent that the continua of biliteracy and associated notions such as ecology of language and voice, ideological/ implementational spaces and the ethnography of language policy and planning, ethnographic monitoring and mapping CoBi, and antiracist and decolonial pedagogies contribute to furthering socially just and equitable cultural and linguistic diversity in our world through educational research, policy, and practice, it will be fulfilling the purpose for “imagining” it in the first place.

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