

The challenge of bilingualism in a multilingual society: The Bolivian Case

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Abstract

Bolivia is a multilingual society recognising as many as 36 different ethnic groups with more or less different languages. The attitude towards bilingualism is based on experiences acquired over centuries through a history characterized by a minority ruling the majority. As in the other Latin American countries the ruling elite of Spanish descent has systematically neglected the culture and languages of the indigenous peoples. The Educational Reform of 1994 represented a significant shift in language and education policy, promoting bilingual primary education in areas dominated by indigenous people and replacing French with an indigenous language in secondary school. The Constitution of 2009 establishes Bolivia as a multilingual state and requires that all public employees talk at least two of the country's official languages. It was followed by a new Education Act that promotes the process of decolonization of the education and makes it more multicultural aiming to strengthen the country's different cultures and languages. The article examines the discussion on and attitudes towards bilingualism and evaluates the impact of the official policy aiming at changing the situation for bilinguals.

Keywords: mother-tongue, bilingualism, interculturality, social asset, Bolivia, indigenous peoples

I Introduction

Lack of access to bilingual education is one of the factors that, according to the 2010 Education for All - Global Monitoring Report '*Reaching the marginalized*,' may lead to poverty. Where the official language is not the language most commonly spoken at home there are strong links from language to poverty and marginalization. In societies where indigenous people live, competence in the home language has not always been valued leading to discrimination, low self-esteem and stigmatization. Indigenous populations throughout the world are now realising the importance of their language claiming the right to intercultural bilingual education. They address deeper problems of discrimination and inequality and express linguistic, cultural, economic, and political demands including the right to decide how and in what language their children shall be educated (UNESCO 2010:12,174); rights stated in several articles in the 'United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. In Bolivia bilingual education has been a main theme for discussion among indigenous peoples since the 1980s (Drange 2011; Howard 2009). The assimilationist educational system caused a lack of opportunity to develop good knowledge both of the mother-tongue and Spanish. Although the Educational Act of 1994, 'Intercultural Bilingual Education' (IBE), (*Ley de Reforma Educativa*, LRE) played a role in political processes that brought an indigenous political leader to power in 2005 (UNESCO 2010:205), there was a gap between policy and implementation. The Morales government addressed the situation by including bilingualism as important for the indigenous people as well as for the Spanish-speaking population both in the Constitution of 2009 and in the educational Act '*Avelino Siñani-Elizardo Pérez*' that passed the Congress in December 2010 after being worked on since 2006.

The aim of the article is to investigate the situation for bilingualism in Bolivia today. What challenges does the government of Bolivia encounter in the effort to change the attitude of the people on bilingualism? To what extent is bilingualism regarded as a social asset and how has the situation changed since bilingual education became state policy?

II Methodology

The analysis is based on information collected during several stays in Bolivia on educational trips with students from 2004 to 2011, a review of relevant literature and face-to-face interviews and informal conversations with government officials, teachers, lecturers, students and parents in order to illustrate the situation for IBE and language attitudes[1]. Main informants have been the linguists and teachers in Quechua Etna Otondo at Universidad Pedagógica, Sucre and Primitivo Nina at Universidad San Francisco Xavier, Sucre, both with indigenous background. I am also referring to lectures about Bolivian education, among others one of the pioneers in the work for IBE, the educator Pánfilo Yapu C. of Quechua origin. In addition I have made use of the possibility to interview school teachers, students and other people I met and I will refer also to information from interviews conducted by my students where I have served as interpreter. When relevant I refer to interviews with people in the Andean region of Ecuador both from the fieldwork for my master thesis in 1994 (Drange 1997) and from several visits to the same area.

The term 'mother-tongue' is an important concept when discussing bilingualism. I use the term alternately with 'home language' referring to the language of the home which in this context generally equals the first language learned. Spanish has been the language of prestige in Latin America since colonisation although historically spoken by a minority in most countries; 'Urban Spanish speakers have long dominated culturally, politically, and economically, even while representing a numerical minority in many areas' (King & Benson 2004:242f). The concepts 'minority/majority' in the Andean context refers to 'elite vs. majority'; the Spanish-speaking elite numerically has not been the largest group and what is generally named the 'minority' is a majority belonging to several indigenous groups. The indigenous languages have had little power and prestige. I find Romaine's statement on 'minority' adequate for the Andean context: 'The label 'minority' is often simply a euphemism for non-elite or subordinate groups, whether they constitute a numerical majority or minority in relation to some other group that is politically and socially dominant' (2004:389).

There are interesting similarities in the situation for the indigenous people in Latin America and the Nordic minorities as a contrastive perspective. As the Sami have been exposed to Norwegianisation in the construction of the Norwegian nation, the indigenous peoples of Latin America have been exposed to Castilianisation[2] by governing elites. I compare the situation of the Bolivian indigenous peoples and the Sami's of Norway referring to Harald Eidheim's fieldwork in northern Norway (1979/1994b). The Quechua linguist José Maldonado from Ecuador commented on the parallelism visiting the Sami Teacher Training College in 1994 expressing kinship to the Sami. He regarded then the Sami process to be 20 to 30 years ahead of the process in the Andean region (Opheim 1994).

In the article I will review bilingualism theoretically[3] using examples from bilingualism in the Bolivian context both historically and from the more recent situation: how the constitution and the new educational act are dealing with bilingualism and how the Bolivian reforms are carried through. I will then discuss the challenges to the current government: whether bilingualism today is considered a social asset by the indigenous population.

III Bilingualism in the Bolivian context

Population and languages

Historically different ethnic[4] groups with their own languages have lived concentrated in diverse areas in the country. Aymara seems to have been the main language in the Bolivian highland before the arrival of the Inca; from the Inca conquest Quechua took over in several areas. With more than 10 million speakers in several Andean republics Quechua is today the indigenous language with the highest number of users (Escobar 2004; Klein 2003). After the Spanish conquest Spanish became the only accepted language in the colony and later in the republic. Not until the revision of the constitution in 1994 was it recognised that Bolivia is a multilingual and a multiethnic society (Canessa 2006; Congreso Nacional 1967/1994/1995 Art. 1). Thirty-six languages together with Spanish were in 2000 declared to be official languages[5]. In the census of 2001[6], 62 % of the population over fifteen years declared themselves to belong to one of the indigenous groups Quechua (31 %), Aymara (25 %), Guaraní (1.5 %) and the 33 smaller ethnic groups in the lowland. Guaraní is an official language in Paraguay and also spoken in Brazil and Argentina. Today many of the smaller languages are in danger of extinction. In the census 63

% of the population stated they had learned to speak a language other than Spanish indicating that the majority of the inhabitants are bilingual (D'Emilio 2003).

In most cases a bilingual person in Bolivia is bicultural, speaks an Amerindian language as his/her mother-tongue, L1, with Spanish as a second language, L2. Definitions of bilingualism vary on the level of domination of the languages and include varying degrees of the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Speakers are rarely fluent in two languages, one may master a language orally and not be able to read or write it or one may understand a language when spoken and may read it, but not be able to speak or write it. The ability to use a language 'for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people' will generally also vary (Grosjean 1998/2004:34; cf. Myers-Scotton 2006:3). In Bolivia domination of the languages will vary from balanced bilingualism, mastering the languages equally according to age-level, to non-balanced, dominating one language better than the other. Many have only some degree of passive knowledge of the L1 having grown up with speakers but not learned to speak it themselves; still they are 'likely to possess cultural knowledge that enables them to understand subtle nuances and to practice culturally appropriate behaviors more readily perhaps, than do those who study the same language as a foreign language' (González 2008). The dominant language will be the mother tongue or Spanish depending on the need and use of the language. The domination may change over time 'as the environment changes and the needs for particular language skills also change, so will their competences in these skills' (Grosjean 1998/2004). Several informants comment that there is a noticeable change during the period of Morales presidency. Indigenous languages are gaining importance and value and the competence is increasing as a result of more official emphasis on bilingualism (interviews educators, Quechuas and others 2010, 2011).

Due to poor schooling most bilingual people master the languages only orally. The low literacy rate has its roots in historical factors. Although illiteracy was officially declared eradicated in December 2008, one may assume that the rate of functional illiterates[7] still is high. Only people who have attended school for more than three years will be able to read and write some in Spanish and few have received formal instruction in another L1 than Spanish (Drange 2009).

Recently, researchers also emphasise communicative skills: defining bilinguals as 'individuals or groups of people who obtain communicative skills, with various degrees of proficiency, in oral and / or written forms, in order to interact with speakers of one or more languages in a given society' (Hakuta 2004:115). Most bilinguals are also bicultural and their languages reflect this situation as they switch between cultural codes when they switch between languages. In Latin America Spanish is linked with cities and the mestizo[8] population and the minority languages are identified with the physical territories of rural communities. The situation Romaine refers to on Quechua speakers of Peru relates to all indigenous language speakers in the area: minority language speakers have perceived their home language to be 'the language for community/ family/ home (*ayllu*[9]), and Spanish the language for everything outside those domains' (Romaine 1995:394). However, inland migration challenges the general perception that indigenous peoples are living in their own communities. Today most languages are spoken in the larger cities as well as in their original area and Spanish will also be in use in the traditionally monolingual communities.

Language attitude and identity

Attitude is a main perspective in bilingualism; language is accompanied by attitudes and values held both by its users and by persons who do not know the language. Language is not just an instrument of communication. It is also a symbol of social or group identity, an emblem of group membership and solidarity and serves several communicative functions: it is a tool for thinking and learning, it gives the feeling of belonging and identity (Engen & Kulbrandstad 2004:48; Grosjean 1982:117). Skutnabb-Kangas (1981:92f) ties attitudes to bicultural identity; her definition includes positive attitude to and identification with two languages and/or two cultures. One may feel more at home with one of them, but have emotional and identity ties with both. In bilingual families different family members may have differing ties to the languages used at home. In a TV program in Norwegian television some years ago two young Sami sisters expressed this. They had not learned Sami at home as the parents did not want the daughters to experience discrimination. However, now one of them was learning Sami and wore traditional Sami clothing while the other did not express interest in recovering a Sami identity.

Language attitudes play an important role in a society where different languages coexist. Where two languages are in contact, usually one is considered more prestigious, more beautiful, more expressive, more logical, and better able to express abstract thoughts, and the other language is felt to be ungrammatical, concrete, and coarse (Grosjean 1982:118ff). When a language is under constant attack by the dominant language group, the attitude of the monolinguals may slowly be adopted by the minority group and 'in the end they feel they are speaking an "impoverished" language' (Eidheim 1979/1994a; Romaine 1995:288). This situation is known all over the world where language has been used by the people in power to subjugate minority groups. Studies from several countries prove that people who speak a low status minority language know that their language does not count in the larger society. Eidheim shows how the Sami avoided speaking the home language when Norwegians were listening to escape the 'Lappish stigma as local Norwegians define it'. The Norwegians regarded 'Lappish as an inferior language in a general sense' while Norwegian was the language of prestige .

In Bolivia, even after the revolution of 1952, the main policy on the societal-political level was assimilation into Hispanic language and culture (Hornberger 1997:299; cf. Klein 2003). The members of ethnic groups, in order to be accepted, had to become as much like the elite as possible and give up their special characteristics, language, culture, etc. The United Peasant Union of Bolivia expresses the feeling of permanent devaluation in a document on the educational situation in the indigenous areas:

Education has given us the idea that everything that was ours was bad: the language, the customs, the clothing, our thinking and our land; many educated people are ashamed of being peasants, Quechuas, Aymaras, Guaranís etc... Prohibition of the use of the mother tongue gives children a complex, it makes them feel useless; for this reason they do not take any initiative and they remain silent (CSUTCB 1991:6-7 in D'Emilio 2003).

Studies on attitudes toward bilingual persons show a difference between bilingualism in people in the higher stratum of society who have become bilingual through language studies or by living abroad, elite-bilingualism, and folk-bilingualism. While bilingualism in Latin America has been considered a necessary evil a minority speaker having been bilingual by necessity had to overcome, it has been prestigious to speak English or French[10]. This attitude refers to the 'monolingual, monolithic ideal of a society where bilingualism is a positive asset only when it is élite bilingualism of the kind found in the higher social groups' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:68). Language attitudes also influence the learning of the home language; parents tend to want their children to speak the dominating language well and neglect the mother-tongue so they can dissociate themselves from the stigmatized indigenous population. An elderly Sami told me this was one reason why he and his 9 siblings had not learned Sami at home (2010).

Ultimately, this results in shame and denial of origin and mother tongue of low status and lead 'members of minority groups to minimize or even deny their knowledge of and identification with their mother tongue, to be ashamed of their origins, and correspondingly to exaggerate their knowledge of the majority language in an effort to identify with it as quickly as possible' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:16). As the Sami, people with indigenous roots in the Andes, especially in the cities, have tried to hide their indigenous background and have not encouraged their children to speak the indigenous language (Interviews in Sucre and in Cañar). Nevertheless indigenous people may hold their language in esteem for social or emotional reasons and feel loyalty to it.

Since identity is strongly tied with language, the danger in shifting from monolingualism in a minority language to Spanish monolingualism is a risk of alienation, rootlessness and problems of identity (Engen & Kulbrandstad 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:80).

Education

School and education are important instruments in creating language attitudes. The linguistic task of the Bolivian teacher has been to teach Spanish language and the culture of the Spanish speaking population to the "primitive and undeveloped" natives with the aim to eradicate their culture and make them monolinguals in Spanish (Canessa 2005:135; cf. Luykx 1999). In Nina's words, the majority of the indigenous children were brainwashed in school (interview 2010). A teacher would ask a child: 'Do you want to be an Indian or do you want to be intelligent?' (Quoted in D'Emilio 2003). 'Latin America's option for the indigenous peoples has, from the beginning of the Republican era of the 19th century until

very recently (and perhaps even still) been one of cultural and linguistic homogenisation' (L. E. López & Küper 2000:26).

Indigenous children met a school where the framework of understanding based on the home language was not linguistically relevant, and severe learning restraint and high drop-out rates have been a consequence (Engen & Kulbrandstad 2004:188; King & Benson 2004:245f.). The education system 'systematically reinforced subordination of indigenous people' (UNESCO 2010:205). A Guaraní fighting for bilingual education, Bonifacio Barrientos, recorded his experiences in school with great pain: 'I couldn't understand in Castellano: the teachers treated me like a donkey, like I am stupid, but if they had spoken to me in Guaraní, I would have been able to answer well' (Quoted in D'Emilio 2003). One of few adults who by 1975 had completed elementary school in a Quechua community in Cañar, Ecuador, said he did not understand anything in school until he was in 4th grade, he managed by memorising (Drange 1997). However, although the Spanish colonisation led to an integration of different ethnic groups in a society run by Spaniards and their offspring, they did not succeed in the attempt to assimilate the indigenous population (Klein 2003; Luykx 1999).

Not until the 1994 educational reform it was allowed to use other languages than Spanish in the classroom (Yapu C. lecture 2010). The reform was an important step, embodying an IBE program for the whole country incorporating all Bolivian Indigenous languages, beginning with the three largest (Drange 2007; Hornberger 1997). Indigenous people's right to learn in their own language was established, reflecting 'greater recognition and respect for the languages and cultures of indigenous groups' (King & Benson 2004:242). According to the Act education is intercultural and bilingual because it respects the heterogeneity of the country (Congreso Nacional 1994: Art. 1,5). The children's first language is to be used as the medium of instruction for the first several years in the districts and areas where the students speak their original language with Spanish as L2 (Congreso Nacional 1994 Decreto no.23950: Tit. I, Cap. II, Art. 11). Such programs function well in many countries (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:129).

However, the success of a reform depends on the implementation and this has been challenged by political opposition, lack of basic resources, large urban/rural disparities, as well as between Spanish-speaking and indigenous population, and boys and girls; 'These problems are common in ex-colonial countries but are compounded in the Andes, where high altitudes result in extreme temperatures, low crop yields, inadequate sanitation, and distances that are difficult to traverse' (King & Benson 2004:243). I have seen all this on my visits to Bolivia. In a primary school in the country many students did not start school 6 years old because they had to walk for an hour or more to get to school and parents would not send them. Consequently, many children never go to school; for a 10 year old it is hard to start in 1st grade when the schoolmates are 6. The only teacher taught 1st to 3rd grade together in one class and 4th to 6th in another class in order to cope with the task. The 'Wednesday teacher' syndrome was also an element in this school (D'Emilio 2003). The distances affect the teacher's presence; she did not live in the village and went home every weekend to come back on Monday. To draw the salary she had to be in the city on Friday to go to the bank (Personal communication 2004). Another problem is that the outcome of the harvest will determine the parents' possibilities to finance the expenses; attending school is free, but school materials are not. Also the poor conditions in the schools affect the education negatively.

The emphasis in the implementation of the reform has been on the language as a main challenge. A controversial element was to develop standardized writing systems (Yapu C. lecture 2010; cf. Luykx 2003:92; 2004). A unified linguistic variety of the indigenous language and a unified alphabet was agreed on in 1994. It has 'provoked concern among some Quechua speakers for the future survival of regional dialects' that the language planners were university-trained experts and government functionaries who use mostly Spanish in their daily life (Luykx 2003). Luykx also found that the concern was related to identity; 'Speakers' concern for the survival of regional dialects in the face of standardisation is, on a deeper level, a concern for the survival of regional identities'. I met this fear also among teachers in Ecuador which is going through the same process. They expressed fear of loss of the local dialect when the students learned the standardised version of the language (interview 2008). People also react negatively to the new standardized varieties because new orthographies are considered difficult, unfamiliar words, and archaic terms etc. made it difficult to understand the textbooks (Luykx 2003).

An evaluation of the reform after ten years showed, however, that more students attended school, an increased number of students graduated from elementary school, the number of bilingual schools had increased; it also showed that indigenous students in bilingual schools had better self-esteem (Albó 2004; cf. Contreras C. & Simoni 2003). Evidently there has been a quantitative improvement although my informants in 2010 disagreed to whether they could see positive results of the reform. Also the statistics of schooling show that indigenous peoples are still doing poorly in education relative to non-indigenous children. According to the 2010 EFA Report indigenous people and ethnic minorities are facing particularly severe disadvantages in education: 'Aymara speakers aged 17 to 22 accumulate two years fewer in school than do Spanish speakers and for Quechua speakers the figure is four years' (UNESCO 2010:146). Lack of trained teachers for upper primary and secondary is one reason that the reform has not had the expected results; this has limited the development of L1 and is leading to an early-exit transitional approach (King & Benson 2004). The teacher training institutions did not train teachers in the indigenous languages; however, when teachers knowing the language and culture were chosen as advisers it would cause some advance (Nina interview 2010). A basic condition to succeed in IBE in an indigenous community 'is to have a teacher who shares the language and culture' (D'Emilio 2003).

Since a locally based curriculum was not developed, the education based on the reform has only been bilingual, not intercultural (Bolivian anthropologist Martin Bazurco lecture 2007). 'Intercultural bilingual education focuses on more effective integration of indigenous children into mainstream education. For many indigenous groups this objective is too limited' (UNESCO 2010:174). Genuine intercultural education implies both bilingual education, using and valuing more than one language in teaching and learning, and an education that makes bridges between the two worlds and cultures the children live in: for instance the Andean world of the indigenous grandparents and the western world (Drange 2011). For the Morales government based on indigenous movements> a multiethnic society is multicultural in a normative sense, referring 'to an ideology that attaches positive value to cultural diversity, calls for the equal recognition of different cultural groups, and calls upon the state to support such groups in various ways' (Miller 2006:326). Officially the recognition is affirmed in the new name of the nation, the 'Plurinational State of Bolivia', and in the first article in the New Constitution: Bolivia is founded in the plurality and the political, economic, juristic, cultural and linguistic pluralism, within the country's integrating process (Congreso Nacional 2009).

The new educational act recognises the cultural groups as it is based on indigenous philosophical principles and oriented towards the re-appropriation of indigenous cultural heritages: it is universal, communitarian, democratic, decolonizing, emancipatory, scientific, productive, intracultural, intercultural, and multilingual. By decolonisation it will bring ethnic boundaries to an end and not privilege western thoughts as the only and universal ones (La Asamblea Legislativa Plurinacional 2010). It emphasises indigenous decision-making, indigenous aims and objectives and indigenous teaching and learning practices. According to Nina it is 90 % indigenous (interview 2010).

Education in the home language is essential not only for the individual, but also for the society as a whole. If one fails to give indigenous children an adequate education in their own language society will suffer:

Society gets back the negative consequences of what it set going itself by organising the education of minority children so badly. The children who achieve little at school and have little or no further education grow up to be adults who have difficulties on the labor market, difficulties in understanding why their situation is disadvantaged, and difficulties in doing anything about it. Now society should bear the responsibility for them, because it influenced their chances in a negative direction' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:246).

The Bolivian society has suffered from these consequences leaving nearly 3 out of 5 of the population in poverty while extreme poverty afflicts 20 % with indigenous people suffering the most[12]. If the situation does not change, the country will remain one of the poorest in the region. It is therefore essential for the whole country that the government is focusing on IBE.

IV Bilingualism as a social asset - special challenges to the government.

Languages function as symbols of groups. In today's globalised world with growing migration both within and across countries, the smaller languages are in danger of decline. A community that once was

monolingual 'becomes bilingual as a result of contact with another (usually socially more powerful) group and becomes transitionally bilingual in the new language until their own language is given up altogether'. Traditionally the Spanish speaking mestizo community has despised the indigenous languages and cultures and the peoples belonging to them have felt stigmatized (King & Benson 2004:243) a situation that may lead to language change and loss. Loss of language has unthought-of consequences not only for the language, but also for the culture as it is common to take over the values of the larger society together with the language. The cultural wealth to be found in minorities will then also be in danger of being lost (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:80).

What have been the attitudes for ages will not change overnight by decisions of the Congress. It is a challenge for the government to turn people's view of bilingualism to see it as a social asset in a society where indigenous languages for hundreds of years have been associated with ignorance and discrimination. Spanish is still the official language in practice dominating areas of socio-cultural significance: in public administration all the official documents are written in Spanish, the web-sites of the President and the Government are in Spanish as well as education and trade.

Official bilingual education policy is one step, but this step alone is not sufficient. The government must take responsibility for understanding literacy as promoting the indigenous language, promulgating indigenous knowledge, and building indigenous identity (Hornberger 1999; cf. Luykx 2003). As Skutnabb-Kangas states, the risk of failing in the attempt to become bilingual is greater for minority children. The consequences of failure may be severe: to a child who becomes almost monolingual or very dominant in her own language, future educational opportunities may be closed. It will be difficult to compete in the labor market, the chances of sharing in the life of the larger community and of influencing it will be limited. Further it will be 'impossible for her to try to improve the situation of her own group, together with others, to demand linguistic and other rights for her group, since such demands must be made in the majority language which she does not command well enough' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:79).

Educational challenges

The government has met considerable opposition to the reform from teachers, especially from the urban teacher union; they are not valuing the indigenous languages and do not see bilingualism as an asset (Howard 2009). In a little neighbour community to Sucre, Yotala, for instance, the director and the teachers commented that the students knew Quechua, but did not use it and did not care about studying it. In an inquiry[13] in secondary school, however, 32 out of 39 students born between 1986 and 1990 answered that they spoke Quechua daily, and 34 considered Quechua an important subject at school. They regarded it an asset to be bilingual and most of the students considered Quechua an important subject in the curriculum. Some of the parents were monolingual either in Spanish or in Quechua. According to the EFA Report of 2008, Bolivia is moving with steady progress toward the multilingualism and mother-tongue initial instruction in primary education, progress is being made' (UNESCO 2008:29).

Both LRE and the new act direct intercultural education to the indigenous disempowered group as well as to the non-indigenous dominant Spanish-speaking group. IBE is considered an asset not only to the indigenous child who will be able to appreciate its own culture and traditions, but also to the monolingual Spanish child getting to know a culture that is oral and based on experiences not on books. However, the success rests upon the efficiency of the education in giving both the indigenous and the non-indigenous students affirmation of their identity and widening of perspective. 'If the minority children are the only ones to become bilingual, and the majority children learn but a few songs and phrases in the minority language [...], then it is closer to [...] bilingual education leading to monolingualism, even if it may be good for the attitudes of majority children' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:133). The success rests on to what degree the multicultural perspective is implemented in the educational means as well as in the subjects' curriculum (Hauge 2004:11).

A main challenge to the government is the parents' attitude. One problem has been the teachers' deficiency in indigenous languages. Parents, who realised that the children were more proficient in Quechua than the teacher, resisted the education in the home language (Nina interview 2010). However, a more essential challenge is that parents ask why it is an asset to learn both a native language and Spanish. To them the asset is to learn Spanish well to reach further than they did themselves and to avoid discrimination (Otondo lecture 2010 cf. Nuevas Palabras, La Paz, No. 138:5). This may lead to the use of

only Spanish at home, hoping that the children will obtain proficiency of the country's prestige language, and in that way give them better conditions in life. According to a director of a bilingual high school in Ecuador many regard it better not to learn the indigenous language; some grandparents in charge of grandchildren with parents in the USA are using only Spanish at home hoping to prevent that the grandchildren experience the same discrimination as they did (interview 2008, cf. King & Benson 2004:255). They do not know that proper mastering of the home language is the best foundation for learning L2 while learning the parents or grandparents poor Spanish gives the children a bad starting point for language development (personal information Spanish teacher in Cañar, Ecuador 2010). For the conceptual development and the socialisation in general it is important that the parents speak a language they master well (Engen & Kulbrandstad 2004:190). Parents and grandparents are confusing the phenomena of learning a language and being taught in a language. Adequate proficiency in Spanish is essential for schooling and participating in the greater society while it is necessary to master the mother tongue to experience belonging to own culture and traditions. As one informant put it: the importance of the mother tongue is cultural while the importance of Spanish is social (Otondo interview 2010).

A main cause for the lack of proficiency in Spanish is that it has not been taught as L2 in rural schools; 'Spanish has simply been used in schools without being taught according to appropriate methods for the teaching of a second language' (D'Emilio 2003). Several informants talked about the poor Spanish people from rural areas speak when coming to the city and for some parents better schooling in Spanish is a reason for inland migration: in order to improve in life the children need to learn a more proficient Spanish than they used to do in rural schools.

Bilingual education is important from a pedagogical perspective; both OECD and UNESCO in 'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity' recommend use of the home language in education, especially in primary teaching. Children raised in homes where a language other than Spanish is spoken grow up with a better-than-average opportunity to develop additive bilingualism, that is, proficiency in both Spanish *and* their heritage language. Every child should 'be given the opportunity to develop the language first learned to full native mastery, to be proud of it, and to have her own identification accepted by others. In the ideal society it should be a human right to be able to use one's mother tongue for all purposes, both unofficial and official' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:19). The Education for All Monitoring report for 2008 focuses on the need for indigenous children to have access to good-quality education 'appropriate and accessible schooling opportunities, adequate resources in schools and cultural relevance of the education offered. Language of instruction plays a key role. Bilingual education has been found to improve the schooling outcomes of children from indigenous communities in many countries' (UNESCO 2008:120).

Bilingual education has been limited to the primary grades. The basic educational problems are the organisation of schools in bilingual areas and the best pedagogical methods for teaching two languages. There is a great need for bilingual education materials and for trained teachers. 'Formal bilingual education programmes require the production of learning materials in local languages and special training for teachers' (UNESCO 2007:134). In Bolivia written textbooks, texts and learning materials in local languages are scarce, a severe challenge to a government that promotes bilingualism; Textbooks introduced by the school reform show images of the natives generally depicted 'in the mountains or forest in a rural and "traditional" setting. People are very much described as "indigenous" in the literal sense of the word, and the timelessness of these images further underlines their lack of modernity' (Canessa 2005:135). It is a challenge to develop appropriate material for IBE to be used also in the cities where education is given in Spanish. As the nation, the school and the classroom may be a diverse context with many sociolinguistic contexts that 'ranges from monolingualism in one language to monolingualism in another, passing through different levels of skills of both languages' (D'Emilio 2003). When it is not possible to concentrate the children of each language group in separate schools or classes, it will be necessary to develop a model for mother-tongue instruction parallel to the instruction in Spanish.

As the Constitution claims that Bolivia is founded on cultural and linguistic diversity, higher education is also supposed to be multilingual, and to the universities it is a duty to create programs to the recovering, preserving, developing, learning and divulging of the different languages of the nations and indigenous villages (Congreso Nacional 2009 Art. 91 and 95 II).

Inland migration.

LRE of 1994 opened for the indigenous population to receive education in their native languages in the territories the government defined as indigenous. Although different ethnic groups still live concentrated in some areas of the country, a significant migration to the cities gives educational challenges to bilingualism. The migrants concentrate in the outskirts of the cities forming new suburbs. El Alto was an area of migrant suburbs of La Paz city until 1988 when it was formally declared a city. The majority of the inhabitants have always been Aymara. In Santa Cruz the major indigenous group is now Quechua. A local school with 800 students in one of the newer suburbs of Sucre may serve as an example. All the students spoke Quechua, many started school without knowing Spanish while all the teachers were monolinguals in Spanish. The greatest hindrance for the students' achievement is the language the director said; many students have problems all the way through school (interview 2006). It will retard the indigenous children's education when they have to receive all teaching in, for them, a foreign language, the knowledge of their own language suffers and its cultivation is neglected.

One consequence of internal migration is that most bilingual persons belonging to an ethnic group are for practical economic reasons in daily contact with people who do not know their language. Knowledge of Spanish is an economic necessity as this is used in administration and in most of the labour market. Several of the informants therefore agreed that teaching literacy in indigenous languages is not interesting in the cities; The director for adult education and literacy in La Paz, commented that people need to know Spanish and therefore it is best to teach in that language. People have put away Aymara when they have moved to town where Spanish is the language they want to use and improve (interview 2007). The result is that today many people identifying themselves as indigenous are urbanised and may after two or three generations have shifted to Spanish as home language. As for the guide Eduardo, he did not learn Aymara at home as his parents switched to Spanish after having two children in La Paz (interview 2006). In Sucre I met students who grew up in the city hearing the parents talk Quechua but not learning it themselves. This way of switching is related to the lack of value the society has given to bilingualism where indigenous languages are in question..

In 2010, however, I met parents in the outskirts of Sucre who used Quechua at home and wanted the children to learn well both Spanish and their home language (interview 2010). In 2011 I was observing a class given to 2nd grade pupils by a student teacher also in the outskirts of Sucre. The student as well as the ordinary teacher explained everything in Quechua as the pupils in general did not understand much Spanish. I assume this is a result of the new educational police where the student teachers have to study the local indigenous language in their teacher training.

Social status

The mastery of Spanish has been important for an individual not only as a medium for communication; it has also meant a means to social advance. Bilingualism is still often associated with subordinate social positions. Spanish is considered the language of the educated and urbanised middle class. Speaking the indigenous languages Aymara, Quechua etc. as a rural and uneducated person serves as a marker of one's inferior status as 'the dominant national discourse values urban, mestizo, Spanish-speaking culture over rural, indian, Aymara, or Quechua-speaking cultures' (Canessa 2005:132). Bilingualism is

something you "get away from" if you succeed in climbing the social ladder, as a halfway house in the process of transition from *monolingualism* in a little regarded, low status minority language, via *bilingualism* in the low status mother tongue and the high status majority language, to a final *monolingualism* in the majority language (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:67).

When moving to the city it has been common to change one's surname to a Spanish one to avoid discrimination and since bilingualism is viewed negatively and with suspicion, parents often have discouraged their children from using the home language. Is it possible to reverse the attitude that has reigned for centuries? Is it possible to reverse the tendency to shift from monolingualism in an indigenous language to Spanish monolingualism? Several studies have proved that attitudes may change when a society has taken action to lift the status of a minority language by for instance introducing bilingual education in school. The revitalisation of the Sami language is one example[14], the situation of

Guaraní in Paraguay is another showing that when a once-stigmatized language becomes officially recognised as a national language, the attitudes toward it changes considerably and it becomes accepted and respected (Grosjean 1982:122; Luis Enrique López 2009). Official recognition by the government is what may lead to change in attitude from negative to positive towards a language (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:313f). In Bolivia there are several signs that this process has been initiated and that the indigenous languages are gaining prestige in different ways. With the awakening of ethnic consciousness urban professionals and intellectuals are turning to their mother-tongue and express pride in belonging to an indigenous group. One teacher who studied Quechua in order to reach a deeper understanding not only of his mother-tongue but also of his own culture says: 'Now I am proud of being Quechua'. He also points at the benefit of knowing several languages: 'life is richer since a language is the bridge to another culture' (Interview 2006). Native language education is important for developing a positive self-perception in the younger generation (Engen & Kulbrandstad 2004:194).

For some years professionals have considered it an asset to speak an indigenous language. 'The ability to speak an indigenous language is highly valued among educated urban people as it is a useful passport to a job with an NGO'. In the mentioned school in Yotala a teacher in first grade with several monolingual Quechua students used both languages in her teaching. When monolingual Spanish speaking parents made claims about this, she called attention to the fact that it will be a social asset to master not only Spanish in the Bolivian society asking if it would not be of importance for their children when as trained doctors they would be able to get jobs as bilingual professionals (interview 2006). The teacher knew that the situation would change. Four years later Otondo found that the attitude towards learning an indigenous language had changed; university students and students at the teacher training colleges are now motivated for studying indigenous languages. Also students from Sucre who grew up with indigenous parents who spoke only Spanish at home wanted to study Quechua (Otondo interview 2010). It is now a requisite for public employees in areas dominated by an indigenous population to speak the local language and master at least two official languages as work.

Age and Sex – differences in bilingualism

Indigenous men are more likely to be exposed to contact with the Spanish speaking society than women. Men have to join the army and there young monolingual indigenous men learn to speak Spanish; men who avoid military service are 'likely to be functionally monolingual' (Canessa 2005:137). Hence women in the villages are monolingual as they are more centred on the home and family, have often not attended school and rarely move beyond the world of their mother-tongue .

Today the statistics show that more children, both boys and girls, are attending school and fewer drop out before graduating from primary school. As schooling encourages bilingualism, one may expect increased bilingualism among the younger generations.

V Concluding reflections.

Language competence is an essential component of personal, academic, and economic processes and success. The attitude towards bilingualism in the society is based on experiences acquired over centuries. In all former colonies of Spain, Spanish has been the dominant language: the only official and only accepted language spoken by the people who have been holding political, cultural, and economic power. The policy of assimilating the indigenous groups into society has led to mostly unidirectional bilingualism, from the indigenous languages towards Spanish (Escobar 2004), with the mother-tongue used only as an instrument (Otondo lecture 2010). The indigenous people have been forced to become bilingual, while people with Spanish as their home language have not been motivated to learn an indigenous language. The consequences have been that 'high rates of Quechua-Spanish bilingualism only mask a continuous cross-generation shift from Quechua monolingualism to Spanish monolingualism, at both individual and community levels' (Hornberger 1997:299).

There is sufficient research showing that the best way to be literate is by use of the mother tongue and that high quality additive bilingualism have positive effects not only on children's academic achievement, but also on identity development and family relationships. The significant policy shift on bilingualism in Bolivia is an important step in changing people's attitude on bilingualism. The process started with the IBE in the 1990-ties, but the greatest progress is to be found during the Evo Morales government when one may see some positive changes in attitude towards bilingualism and a revitalisation of indigenous

languages and cultures. This shows the importance of backing legal provisions 'by social and political mobilization on the part of marginalized people' (UNESCO 2010:12).

In a multilingual society like Bolivia a lot depends on the relation between the different language communities. To prevent language loss, one must overcome the problems of attitudes to bilingualism by increasing the status of the languages, developing adequate materials and training enough teachers. "Ensuring that children with disabilities enjoy opportunities for learning in an inclusive environment requires changes in attitude, backed by investment in teacher training and learning equipment" (UNESCO 2010:12).

Education in the home language is essential for developing a positive self-esteem and a sound identity. Most studies show that formative education in the home language is one of the most important prerequisites for the student's achievement in school; 'the impact of language remained after adjusting for factors such as poverty, location and other home background indicators' (UNESCO 2009:114). However, it is not enough to put a language on par with other official languages and to introduce it in education to increase the prestige of its speakers. School is not the most important element in preservation of languages. If the goal is to strengthen the different languages, the government must take other steps as well. According to Fishman 'Out-of-school hours and interactions are much more numerous and much more influential than are the in-school hours and interactions even during the few years that children are still in "school"' (1999:118). Creating openness for using home-languages in out-of-school interactions is necessary to substantially redress long-term social inequities.

Another important measure is to promote indigenous languages in other domains crucial to its survival like the workplace, public administration, and community life (Luykx 2004:154). The Morales government is doing some effort in this direction working together with grassroots movements and to some extent also with parents' organisations. However, as long as mastering Spanish well is a requisite to enter into politics and the Spanish language continues to dominate areas of socio-cultural significance, it is difficult to see that bilingualism will be considered a social asset by large groups of people.

Increasing the status of the indigenous languages is first and foremost done by strengthening language loyalty by the speakers themselves, recognising the native indigenous language speakers as the experts on their own language, on 'what constitutes beautiful, powerful or correct speech'. Subsequently languages need to be linked to and targeted on functional institutions that can constantly reward their use. Adequate teaching of Spanish as L2 is also a main element in increasing the status of the other official languages in Bolivia. People have to experience that the children through education are acquiring satisfactory mastery of the society's common language to see bilingualism as a social asset.

'I think we are making progress but I don't know where we are going' Nina said. 'Earlier you did not have any rights if you dressed like an Indian: you could not present yourself in a bank or study at a university. Now the attitude has changed, at least face to face' (interview 2010). There are signs of a move in a positive direction when it comes to attitudes to and interest in bilingualism in Bolivia. In the Constitutional assembly people met in their original outfits and there were translation through headphones for the delegates. The Constitution affirms the multilingual diversity and requires mastery of at least two languages for public employees. Job advertisements are published demanding language competence in at least one indigenous language beside Spanish. According to UNESCO "Reforms in Bolivia have emphasized the important role of intercultural and bilingual education in providing ethnic and linguistic minority children with good-quality schooling, and in overcoming social stigmatization" (UNESCO 2010:12).

With the ethnical awakening the situation is slowly changing. Yapu says it will be impossible to disrupt the progress now as the indigenous peoples are becoming aware of their rights (lecture 2010). I have myself observed change when meeting groups of women in literacy courses; they were much more positive to bilingualism for their children in 2010 than earlier. Through education and literacy doors are opened to the marginalised and disempowered indigenous population. The government is taking steps to prevent extinction of minor languages. However, as long as Spanish is the key to social mobility, linguistic assimilation will remain the most common means to economic survival. As Luykx states, 'language policy cannot be approached in isolation from other social questions' (2004:156). If

bilingualism is to be regarded as a social asset, parents as well as teachers and politicians need to see that the children will profit in the society from knowing well both their mother-tongue and Spanish.

Notes

¹ Citations from Spanish and Norwegian sources have been translated by the author. The interpretations are the author's responsibility.

² *Castellanizar*, "blanquear", bleach, whiten. Concepts used in Latin America from the time of the colonies about civilizing the original population by christening, teaching Castellan and transforming culture and mode of living, i.e. assimilate or mestizize.

³ The theory on bilingualism is based on Myers-Scotton 2006, Skutnabb-Kangas 1981, Engen and Kulbrandstad 2004, Grosjean 1982, Grosjean 1998/2004 and Romaine 1995

⁴ Ethnicity in the article is understood as a social process, 'the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses'

⁵ Decreto Supremo N° 25894 of 11th September 2000, Ley N° 3.204 of 30th September de 2005 and Ley N° 3.603 of 17th January 2007

⁶ Official census statistics on belonging to ethnic group and bilingualism have several limitations such as time and money and whether the respondent and census taker share the same idea about the terms used (Romain 2004: 400f.).

⁷ 'A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his (or her) group and community and also for enabling him (or her) to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his (or her) own and the community's development'

⁸ *Mestizo* originally meant someone of mixed European/American parentage; today it is an unclear and ambiguous category

⁹ Extended kinship organization that involves reciprocal obligations and mutual support.

¹⁰ See for instance *Reuters* 'Andean nations seek revival for ancient Inca tongue' "Kichwa (Quechua) used to have no prestige ... If you wanted prestige, you learned English, French or German," says linguist Jose Maldonado" accessed at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5B606C20091207> May 07.2010.

¹¹ For a discussion on the concept of interculturality in the educational reforms, see Drange 2007 and Drange 2011.

¹² UN data accessed at <http://data.un.org/Search.aspx?q=Bolivia+poverty> May 09.2010

¹³ Carried out by one of my students in 2005. 39 students participated, 23 male and 16 female.

¹⁴ <http://saamidocnet.uit.no/>

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