UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

# *¿Nuestro guaraní?* Language Ideologies, Identity, and Guaraní Instruction in Asunción, Paraguay

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Nora Walsh Lang

Committee in charge:

Professor Olga Vásquez, Chair
Professor Alison Wishard Guerra
Professor Christine Hunefeldt

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University of California, San Diego

2014

# DEDICATION

To all of the members of Ruffinelli family, for opening up their hearts and homes, over and over and again.

## EPIGRAPH

We must understand that they (children) are multidimensional beings, formed and being formed within contexts of discourses and histories. What we should be about is big people helping little people to become big people, theorizing about the practices that nurture and support.

-Norma González (2001)

*I am my language: Discourses of women & children in the borderlands.*

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

*¿Nuestro guaraní?* Language Ideologies, Identity, and Guaraní Instruction in Asunción, Paraguay

by

Nora Walsh Lang

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

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Professor Olga Vásquez, Chair

How do young people in Paraguay develop social identities as they engage in multilingual language practices? What are the impacts of language policies that at times encourage the use of Guaraní, and at others discourage it? The primary goal of this study is to explore the relationships between children's language ideologies and the sociohistorical roots of societal level discourses regarding the power and prestige

associated with Spanish and Guaraní in Paraguay. Of equal importance is the role of educators in either challenging or reinforcing those discourses. Field-work was conducted in an urban school in Paraguay's capital, Asunción. Participants' language use, language ideologies, and processes of social identification were analyzed through classroom observations, unstructured interviews, and surveys.

Findings revealed that students' and teachers' use of Guaraní is closely related to perceptions of the language's ability to provide opportunities for upward social mobility. Data also suggests a generational decrease in the use of Guaraní amongst students, and a tendency to reserve Guaraní for the private sphere. Despite efforts to elevate the status of Guaraní, prestige is overwhelmingly associated with European languages (Spanish, English, and Portuguese). Guaraní, in contrast, is strongly associated with Paraguayan national identity, and communicating closeness. While English and Portuguese are perceived to potentially provide financial and social capital, students lack similar motivation to learn Guaraní within the context of the classroom. Although teachers cannot change societal discourses that devalue Guaraní, they *can* facilitate a critical inquiry into such attitudes, and encourage students to challenge the status quo.

CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

Students in Asunción, Paraguay formulate academic identities as well as broader conceptions of self as they negotiate multilingual contexts. From a sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspective, this study is an analysis of how teachers' language practices and language ideologies, paired with societal level discourses, shape students' language practices and attitudes towards Spanish and Guaraní. The perspective on issues of power and identity are based on the Vygotskian (1986) notion that young peoples' identities are formulated through social interaction. Children's interactions with their environment include daily, micro-level communication as well as engagement with macro-level structures rooted in complex sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts. Vygotsky suggests that development of thought occurs through language, "by the linguistic tools of thought and by the sociocultural experience of the child…The child's intellectual growth is contingent on his mastering the social means of thought, that is, language" (p. 94). Thoughts and emotions, expressed through more than one language system, reflect children's processes of negotiating identities that are multiple, dynamic, and overlapping.

While Vygotsky focused primarily on learners' development through their first language, second language learning occurs through largely similar processes (Wells, 1985). Just as infants learn to speak for the first time, children developing second language skills engage in meaningful interactions with adults and peers *through* language, allowing them to begin to create academic and social identities. Particularly for young students, teachers play a central role in this process. Within the context of the

classroom, teachers and students engage in the co-construction of knowledge. This process is an active one; it is not “a didactic transmission of pre-formulated knowledge, but an attempt to negotiate shared meanings and understandings” (Wells, 1985, p. 73).

With the privilege to guide students as they develop a sense of who they are in the world, comes a powerful responsibility. Teaching is never neutral, but fundamentally rooted in societal level power dynamics (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2001). In multilingual contexts, the sociopolitical nature of language learning is even more apparent. In addition to the micro-politics that take place within the classroom as teachers and students interact through language; they also engage in discourses about language itself, i.e. metalanguage. These discourses inevitably communicate varying levels of prestige and value associated with languages and their speakers.

Although the particular bilingualism found in Paraguay is unique in a number of ways, the broader phenomenon of a national language of power juxtaposed with a historically oppressed language is common in countries across the globe. Language policies in and of themselves, without support from other arenas, often have fairly limited repercussions. However, within the context of language instruction, teachers’ micro interactions with students’ have the potential to either reinforce or challenge broader, macro-level power relations. Scholars in the field of bilingual education (Hornberger, 1990, 1997, 2007; Cummins, 2000, 2006) agree that the ultimate goal of language planning should be social change, and that languages *do* have the potential to function as a tool for empowerment. Yet, rather than focus on the policies themselves, this study is an inquiry into the day-to-day interactions between teachers and students through and

surrounding language. Such interactions not only impact students' self-esteem and academic trajectories, but also their social identity development.

My principle goal was to explore students' and teachers' patterns of language use and their attitudes towards the languages that are present in their community. The following questions guided this study: First, what sort of patterns of language use and language ideologies exist amongst students and teachers in Asunción Paraguay? Secondly, what is the nature of the relationship between teachers' language ideologies and those of their students? Ultimately, how do teachers' classroom practices during the instruction of Guaraní impact their students' processes of academic and social identity formation? I raise these questions within the context of a country that has received significant attention for the unique nature of bilingualism. However, the role of teachers in socializing students while reinforcing or challenging language ideologies has received far less attention within studies on bilingual education. Interviews, classroom observations, and surveys of students and teachers who are predominantly Spanish speakers in Asunción, Paraguay, have provided a perspective on language practices and attitudes towards language in Paraguay that are seldom addressed. This study contributes to the field by exploring the notion of language ideologies in multilingual contexts, and highlights the distinct role of language educators in shaping students' outlooks on language.

This study was conducted in a school situated in Fernando de la Mora, a medium sized city within the Central Department of Asunción Paraguay. *Ecolegio 31* is a private school, in which the vast majority of students come from middle class households. This particular context (while unique in some ways) resembles schools throughout Latin

America. Students wear pressed white shirts with forest green skirts or slacks and gossip with their friends at the cantina during spare moments. Mothers gather in the parking area to pick up their children, either in vehicles or on foot. Children careen through open air courtyards, shrieking and chasing soccer balls during recess. Teachers gather in a small room to drink coffee (or *tereré*, a traditional drink in Paraguay) while their students play outside or sit on benches and braid each other's hair. Groups of teachers share jokes and advice as they commiserate with one another over difficult circumstances with students, significant others, and parents who are ill. Some students come from families in which both parents work, while for others, mothers are in charge of managing the household and the children. Long hours are spent creating hearty lunches and dinners to feed five or more, laundering, and monitoring homework completion. Most of these families live comfortably and can afford to purchase certain luxury items such as relatively expensive televisions or occasional dinners at restaurants. Like middle class families in many parts of the world, however, they are very aware of the cost of their purchases and of managing their finances in order to cover all of the necessary bills and services, particularly those related to their children's education.

The number of students in the study is undeniably small and somewhat homogenous. With that said students, teachers and family members from *Ecolegio 31* have many overlapping ideals, ideas, and concerns as those of analogous demographics other regions of the world. This is also true in relation to perspectives on languages. Like in other postcolonial societies in which indigenous languages are still prevalent, patterns of use of Guaraní and Spanish and attitudes towards both languages are linked to power

relations that are centuries old. Language ideologies, deeply connected sociohistorical patterns related to race and social class, are the central focus of this study.

Situating the Study in Asunción, Paraguay

Having spent a significant amount of time in Asunción, I knew that the city was home to intriguing junctures between century old traditions and the spread of technology; between the rich history associated with Guaraní, and the increasing appeal of "global languages" such as English. As a researcher, I became curious about the intersection of language, identity and power. This led to further inquiry regarding the relationships between these arenas within the context of Latin America, particularly as they relate to the field of education. What exactly does it mean to be bilingual? What sort of bilingual practices are acceptable, and which are frowned upon? Who is making those judgments? What is the role of language teachers, and teachers in general, in reaffirming positive notions of bilingualism and bilinguals? While searching for explanations, issues surrounding race, class, language, power, and identity continued to surface. Both as a student and a teacher, I began to question the role of educators in perpetuating or questioning societal level discourses around language. I realized that in order to understand how students see themselves in the classroom and in the world, it is necessary to inquire about their understanding of the role of language in their own identities, as well as teachers' ideologies regarding languages and their speakers.

Although the factors that influence a child's trajectory are countless and occur across all instances of communication (in the home, in stores, on the soccer field, etc.), this study is focused on the ways in which processes of social identification are influenced by the interactions that take place at school. More specifically, it examines

teachers' role in these processes as framed through language. This study will provide insight into the intersections of power, language, and identity in multilingual classrooms and highlight areas that would benefit from further research within the field of bilingual education.

The following chapter provides the historical context for bilingualism in Paraguay. An outline of the theoretical frameworks that informed the study is defined in Chapter Three. Chapter four provides a description of the methodological approach and research design, while Chapter five describes the principle findings. The last chapter includes a summary of the results of the study, and implications for educators and policy makers.

CHAPTER 2

# Language and Power in Paraguay

In order to understand the complex nature of the use of Guaraní amongst Paraguayans, it is crucial to address the course that the language has taken since colonization, and how it has come to occupy a unique position within Paraguayan society. This chapter lays out the sociohistorical context of bilingualism in Paraguay. It begins by situating the study within Asunción, the nation's capital. In the section that follows, I discuss the historical events that marked the trajectory of Guaraní, particularly the role of Jesuit missionaries and isolationist policies during the Triple Alliance and Chaco Wars. Following the historical analysis, I address the current linguistic landscape in Paraguay. The chapter concludes with a brief description of current approaches to bilingual education in Paraguay.

## Paraguay Today

Paraguay is land of anomalies and one of stark contrasts. The nation is dwarfed next to giant neighbors of Brazil, Argentina, and, though less so, by Bolivia. Paraguay's small, landlocked geography results in frequent oversight by entrepreneurs, academics, and travelers. The little known land is often the ground for fantastical imaginations and exotic dramatizations (Greene, 1969; Carver, 2009). Paraguay has been the home of attempts to create utopian societies (Wilding, 1984) as well as that of brutal dictators who are frequently left out of history books (Lewis, 1980; Miranda, 1990). Paraguay boasts a

long history of political and economic isolationist policies, the lasting effects of which will be discussed in the following section.

The nation's capital, Asunción, differs in a number of ways from the rest of the country. While historically the Paraguay's population has been predominantly rural, urbanization resulted in a recent shift in this pattern. Despite urban migration, much of the nation is still sparsely populated, covered by giant fields of soy and cattle pastures. Asunción, however, provides a powerful example of economic disparity that can be found within Paraguay. Giant, fifteen-story buildings covered in mirrored walls literally reflect images of the shanty towns they tower over. Modern, grandiose, overly air-conditioned shopping centers are sprinkled throughout the city. While sitting in traffic jams, horse drawn carts transporting trash, trot alongside sparkling new SUVs on the city's main routes. *Chiperas* in red and white uniforms with giant baskets of warm *chipa* balanced on their heads shout as they stroll down busy streets past brand new fusion cuisine restaurants.

Asunción's school system parallels the contrasts between those with seemingly endless resources, and those who struggle to meet their basic needs. Virtually all families that can afford to do so choose to enroll their children in private schools. At overcrowded and underfunded public schools, classrooms with too few desks are enclosed by shattered windows. Private schools, while varying significantly in terms of the quality of education that they offer, provide smaller class sizes and more up to date, higher quality materials. The most expensive of these schools, in order to maintain their status amongst Asunción's elite, require an extensive interview process for incoming kindergarteners. In addition, private schools often include extracurricular activities not required by the state,

such as chess or swimming. However, it is becoming increasingly common for private schools to incorporate English, French, or Portuguese language programs. This tendency reflects an understanding amongst many Paraguayans, that these languages will provide opportunities for elevating one's social class. In the following section, colonialism in Paraguay is discussed in relation to power relations, economic disparity, and language use in present day Asunción.

## Colonial Roots of Present Day Power Relations

It is crucial to look back to the colonial period in order to gain an understanding of the sociohistorical and sociolinguistic landscape that has influenced, and continues to influence the role of Guaraní in Paraguay. Bilingual scholars in Paraguay, share a variety of opinions regarding the history behind the nation's unique language practices. Rubin, author of *National Bilingualism in Paraguay* (1968) identifies three primary explanations for widespread bilingualism in the nation. She suggests that a combination of economic and social isolation, nationalism during the Triple Alliance War and the Chaco War, and the division of functions of Spanish and Guaraní all contributed to Paraguay's unique linguistic profile. Gynan (2007) offers an overlapping, yet slightly different perspective on the nature of Paraguayans' use of Guaraní. In addition to Rubin's focus on nationalistic policies (both economic and social) that resulted in Paraguay's isolation, Gynan looked further back to the role of Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries. Bartomeu Melià, one of the leading scholars on the colonial period in Paraguay and a Jesuit himself, focuses largely on the relationship between the missions and the *encomienda* system. Designed to organize labor in Spanish colonies, the often brutal forced labor system

granted individual Spaniards with groups of indigenous peoples who were required to work in various capacities The *encomenderos* (*encomienda* owners), in turn for the labor, were meant to protect their property from attack, to provide for their basic needs, and to convert them to Christianity (Simpson, 1950).

In the following section, I explore the role of politically driven isolationist policies surrounding the Triple Alliance and Chaco Wars. I will also address small, yet influential waves of immigration that occurred during this period. Further economic isolation during the Stroessner regime, nearly four decades long, also impacted the use of Guaraní in Paraguay. Lastly, I discuss more recent language planning and language policies.

## Jesuit Missionaries and the *Encomienda* System

Jesuit missions in Paraguay were both well organized and expansive. By 1615, they had established San Ignacio Guazú and Itapúa along the Paraná River. Along the Paranapané, thirteen more missions were founded by 1630. These include Loreto de Pirapó and San Ignacio Miní, San Francisco Javier, Jesús María, Santo Tomás, San Antonio, La Encarnación, San José de Tucutí, San Pablo Yneaiguazú, La Concepción, Arcángeles, and San Miguel (Medina Ruiz, 1987 p. 44). By 1732, the Jesuit missions of Paraguay reached their peak, with 141,182 habitants before shifting into a period of decline (Sáinz Ollero, 1989).

Jesuit missionaries were dedicated to learning Guaraní and used the language both within the mission and for conducting business throughout the colony. The decision to use Guaraní for virtually all types of communication was calculated and based on a

number of interrelated factors. Jesuits in Paraguay, like missionaries in Mexico, Guatemala, and various other parts of the world, found that it was critical to learn the language of the peoples they wished to convert, not only for their religious aspirations but also in order to survive. Undoubtedly devoted to their call to evangelize, Jesuits recognized that translating the catechism to Guaraní would be the most effective way to convert indigenous followers (Gynan, 2007). Their commitment to conversion resulted in the translation of the bible into Guaraní, and eventually the creation of Guaraní dictionaries. There was even a printing press for the missions that functioned for the first part of the 18$^{th}$ century and produced several works in Guaraní (Sáinz Ollero, 1989). Missionaries initiated literacy campaigns in Guaraní and established what was at the time the only school system in rural Paraguay. It is also possible that some missionaries felt, as Melià (1986) himself suggests, that the maintenance of their language was critical to the *teko Guaraní,* a way of living and viewing the world that is distinctly Guaraní. Of equal importance, Guaraní became not only a language of worship, but also the language of commerce and all sorts of exchange between missions and other sectors of colonial Paraguayan society. Melià (1986) argues that this decision was fundamentally tied to the relationship between *encomenderos* and the Jesuits. Village leaders often joined missions under the condition that they would not work for the Spanish. The decision to use Guaraní may have been part of an attempt on the part of missionaries to solidify both moral and economic boundaries between the missions and the Spanish colonizers (Melià, 1986).

The education system, while far from universal, taught some Guaraní children on the Missions to read and write, as well as skills such as dancing and singing. According

to Jesuit missionary José Cardiel, who spent two long stays in Paraguayan missions (one of twelve years and the second of sixteen) the children of chiefs, council leaders, musicians, and other officials, were among those who attended school (Cardiel in Saínz Ollero, 1989). Cardiel described the school system in the missions in a letter to his friend and mentor, P. Pedro de Calatayud. He explained that, in addition to the children of nobility on the missions, other children occasionally attended school upon special request by their parents.

> *En cada pueblo suele haber 20, 30 o 40 caciques. Estas escuelas ya se dijo que están en el primer patio de los Padres, para poder cuidar mejor de ellas: no porque los Padres sean sus maestros inmediatos, que esto no puede ser, habiendo otros muchos ministerios en tanto número. Tienen sus maestros indios; aprenden algunos a leer con notable destreza, y leen la lengua extraña mejor que nosotros. Debe de consistir en la vista, que la tienen perspicaz, y la memoria, que la tienen muy buena: ojalá fuera así el entendimiento. También hacen la letra harto buena: algunos, que se dan a hacer la letra de molde, la hacen con tanta perfección, que nos engañan ser de alguna bella imprenta* (Cardiel in Sáinz Ollero 1989, p. 115). (In each village, there are often 20, 30, or 40 chiefs. These schools are on the main patio of the fathers, in order to take better care of them, not because the fathers are the immediate teachers, because that couldn't be, given that there are many ministries and that they are so many in number. They have their Indian teachers; some learn to read with notable skill, and they read the strange language better than we do. It might be due to their vision, which is sharp, and their memory, which is very good: I wish that their understanding were that way too. They also write very nicely, like molds, that they create with such perfection that they seem like they were printed).

This description points to attitudes towards education of Guaraní children on the missions. Although there is admiration of the ability to write beautifully, impressive memories, and musical talent; the abilities of the indigenous children are described as they would be if a strange animal were completing similar tasks; shocking and charming, and an intriguing potential for exploitation. While the Jesuits established infrastructure

for what would later become the rural school system, comments such as these suggest a fundamentally Eurocentric, if not overtly racist standpoint from which the Jesuits conducted business.

Gynan (2007) also focuses on the lasting role of the *encomienda* system on Paraguayans' use of Guaraní. The relationship between Guaraní laborers and *encomenderos* was one of regular contact. In order to maintain efficient control over the laborers, *encomenderos* were forced to learn Guaraní. It was also not uncommon for these men to keep Guaraní women as concubines. It is possible that some of the children born out of these relations were recognized by their fathers and learned Spanish, but the vast majority would have undoubtedly learned Guaraní from their mothers.

While some accounts address missions in conjunction with the *encomienda* system (Gynan, 2007; Rubin, 1968) Melià (1986) argued that the two structures were fundamentally opposed to one another in a number of ways. Paraguay was distinct in that there was significant resistance on the part of Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries to the colonial *encomienda* system. He highlighted this opposition and cited the missions as one of the most powerful anticolonial forces within the colony; "*una especie de intento en que algunos hombres – los misioneros – creyeron ingenuamente el poder para superar y zafarse del sistema colonial; estaban dentro de la Colonia y contra los colonos*" (Melià, 1986, p. 116). (A kind of attempt in that some men – the missionaries – ingeniously created the power to overcome and untie the colonial system; they were inside of the colony, and against the colonists).

A number of political figures (including the governor of Asunción at the time, D. Hernando Arias de Saavedra, or Hernandarias) were also of the opinion that Jesuits could

provide an opposition to *encomienda* owners (Sáinz Ollero, 1989). Sáinz Ollero argued that opinions regarding the *encomienda* system are what distinguished Paraguayan Jesuits from others. Both Diego de Torres, leader of the first Jesuit province of Paraguay, and then governor Hernandarias, were of the rather utopic opinion that the role of the missions was to rectify the wrongdoings of the *encomenderos*. They supported the theory that the Jesuits should "*oponer las misiones a las encomiendas, como dos formas antitéticas de concebir la colonización, que si bien coincidían en sus objetivos teóricos y últimos, divergían absolutamente en la metodología a aplicar*" (1989, p. 12). (Oppose the missions to the *encomiendas*, like two antithetic forms of understanding colonization, that while their theoretic and ultimate objectives may coincide, they diverge completely in methodology when applied). Melià confirmed that the moral and tangible opposition between the missionaries and the Spaniards was at the very root of the work that took place on the missions, and fundamentally connected to the Jesuit's eventual expulsion from Paraguay (1986).

In addition to the *encomenderos,* Jesuit missions in Paraguay had other enemies to watch out for. Many of them, particularly those near Brazilian territory, were constantly threatened. "*Mamelucos"* were Brazilian slave traders, predominantly from Sao Paulo, who captured indigenous Guaraní from the missions (often in large numbers) to be sold as slaves in Brazil.  A number of Jesuit missions were destroyed by the raiders. After consistent supplication, the government eventually provided the Guaraní with arms in order to defend themselves (Gynan, 2007). This action, however, increased tension in Paraguay. The dynamic between Guaraní speakers on Jesuit missions who were receiving

support from the government, and the elite (whom were still almost exclusively Spanish speakers at this time) appears throughout Paraguay's history of nation building.
"The Jesuits were allowed to keep their 'utopia' as long as it suited the political needs of the Spanish monarchy, and the result was a policy that supported the Jesuit-controlled development and maintenance of the Guaraní language"(Gynan, 2007, p. 245).

Medina Ruíz (1987) describes how Jesuit missionaries, "*emprendieron obra misionera tratando de aprender el idioma indígena que respetaron, cultivaron, sin destruirlo e hicieron permanecer hasta hoy en que el Paraguay es país bilingüe: guaraní-castellano*" (p. 47). (They undertook the mission of learning the indigenous language, which they respected, cultivated, without destroying it, and maintained it such that today Paraguay is a bilingual country: Guaraní-Spanish). Jesuits were, in fact, mandated in 1603 by the *Concilio de Asunción* to learn Guaraní, who deemed the language to be the most effective approach to communicate the divine. Medina Ruíz (1987), however, is overly generous in attributing the entirety of Guaraní maintenance to the missionaries. His account is (admittedly and unapologetically) entirely in support of the actions taken by the Jesuits, and makes no mention of the devastating impact that colonization, exploitation, and forced evangelization had on the Guaraní peoples, or other indigenous communities in Paraguay.

Melià, on the other hand, warns of the tendency of historiographies that gloss over or edit altogether the level of resistance on the part of the Guaraní. Contrary to many such accounts, Melià argues that there were at least twenty-five documented cases of Guaraní rebellion against the colonizers between 1537 and 1616 (Necker 1979, p. 249-54 in Melià 1986, p. 31). He rejects the vision of Paraguayan missions as utopic and instead suggests

that they were an anticolonial force, which nonetheless failed to create true political resistance to the colonial system (1986).

In addition to establishing Guaraní as a language of commerce, missionaries created lasting written materials, and the foundations for the education system in rural areas. However, largely because of the conflicts that arose between Jesuits and other sectors of colonial Paraguayan society, Jesuits were expelled from Paraguay in 1767. Regardless of the moral and political questions surrounding Jesuit "anticolonialism" (and there are many), the powerful role that the Jesuits played in the trajectory of Guaraní in Paraguay is undeniable.

### Paraguayan Nationalism: Isolationist Policies and the Triple Alliance and Chaco Wars

Following the expulsion of the Jesuits, Paraguay entered a new era of language policy that favored the use of Spanish over Guaraní. Shortly after the Jesuits left Paraguay, Don Francisco de Paula Bucareli, governor of Buenos Aires, ordered that Guaraní be eliminated from the classroom and opted for a Spanish only policy (Gynan, 2007) However, the Jesuits had been the only educational presence in the rural sector of Paraguay and the government failed to fill the void once the Jesuits had left. "With no one to replace the Jesuits, less than two decades after the expulsion, the mission system, and with it, rural education, collapsed. The policy of Spanish spread had failed once again" (Gynan 2007, p. 245).

Not long after the expulsion of the Jesuits, the pendulum shifted in favor of Guaraní, despite efforts on the part of policy makers to promote the use of Spanish. José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, who led Paraguay to independence in 1811 and became

president shortly after, favored Guaraní as part of an effort to bolster nationalism among Paraguayans. De Francia implemented strict isolationist policies effectively cutting Paraguay off from neighboring nations, both socially and economically. As part of his effort to isolate Paraguay, de Francia declared Guaraní the nation's official language. In addition to this shift in policy, the President addressed the Paraguayan people in Guaraní, successfully carving out a role for Guaraní within diplomacy (Lambert & Nickson, 2013). Rubin (1968) suggests that de Francia's policies were critical for the trajectory of Guaraní. She suggests that, had Paraguay established open relations with other South American nations following independence, the use of Spanish may have virtually eliminated Guaraní in urban areas (Rubin, 1968).

In addition to the declaration of Guaraní as Paraguay's national language, De Francia's isolationist approach had powerful implications for both Spanish and Guaraní in Paraguay. Language policy was shifted yet again with the onset of the Triple Alliance War beginning in 1865. On the Paraguayan side, the War of the Triple Alliance was fought largely by Guaraní-speakers from rural parts of the country (Rubin, 1968). The war shattered Paraguay, decimating more than sixty percent of the population, and virtually eliminating the Spanish-speaking elite. The devastation echoed in virtually all arenas of society, including patterns of language use: the elimination of Spanish elite virtually halted the spread of Spanish. The rural, monolingual Guaraní population, on the other hand, still functioned even after such dramatic losses. Although Paraguay suffered unbelievable damages during this period, the war also resulted in the consolidation of Paraguayan national identity (Rubin, 1968).

The pendulum, however, continued to swing. Following Paraguay's defeat in the Triple Alliance War, harsh restrictions were placed on the use of Guaraní. Nowhere is this more apparent than within the education reforms that were passed during this period. Immediately after the war came to a close, the new government passed a law prohibiting the use of Guaraní in the nation's schools (Verón Gómez, 2013). The consequences of the brutal tactics used to enforce the use of Spanish in schools extended far beyond bruises and hurt feelings.

> Corporal and psychological punishments inflicted on the children for speaking in school the only language they knew included, among other things, slaps on the mouth, detention during recess, canings, insults, and name-calling. These insults and attacks endured by schoolchildren over more than a century have created a genuine social mutism, with serious effects on the collective self-confidence of the Paraguayan people (Verón Gómez, 2013, p. 408).

Efforts to eliminate the use of Guaraní continued until Paraguay entered in the Chaco War with Bolivia in 1932. Yet again, Guaraní became a useful tool to solidify national identity and to resist the onslaught of neighboring nations. Guaraní was reestablished as the national language during the three-year duration of the Chaco War, but the policy was quickly reversed upon the war's closure. With this shift came renewed patterns of discrimination against the Guaraní language and its speakers (Verón Gómez, 2013).

One of the most powerful and lasting results of these two wars was the solidification of Paraguayan nationalism (Rubin, 1968; Verón Gómez, 2013). Language is a powerful tool delineating who belongs and who does not belong to a nation. Many nations require knowledge of the national language in order to meet the qualifications necessary to become a citizen, or to participate as a member of society through voting

(Joseph, 2010). It is not only nationalism that reinforces the oral use of a language by certain groups. Anderson's (1983) notion of 'imagined communities' highlights the importance of text, and particularly that of "national print-languages". National print languages are capable of producing capital, which reinforces their power over non-print languages. Communities, whether at national or smaller scales, exist in part because of textual representations that bind them together. Textual accounts of war are one of the best examples of this phenomenon, making the language of these texts fundamental to determining who belongs and who does not (Joseph, 2010). Whether they are glorified tales of victory, or devastating accounts of defeat, texts that describe war "offer the distilled essence of national identity" (Joseph, 2010, p. 10). Such texts have the power to both include and exclude, and shape a sense that will be passed on over generations of national memory that contours current images of a nation and its members. The Triple Alliance and Chaco Wars made textual representations to solidify Paraguayan identity all the more important, particularly because of the extent of the destruction that they caused. Documenting this history in Guaraní is not only significant in that monolingual speakers of Guaraní have access to these accounts, but also because such texts underscore the role of the Guaraní language as distinctly Paraguayan.

## Immigration and the Role of Paraguayan Dictator: Alfredo Stroessner

Immigration patterns in Paraguay have also played a role in the retention of Guaraní. Paraguay's relative isolation paired with few male colonizers offer another explanation of the failure of Spanish to gain initial momentum, even in Asunción. Policies that favored the rural masses led many of the Spanish speaking elite to leave the

country, further reinforcing the use of Guaraní and Guaraní monolingualism (Gynan 2007). Unlike neighboring nations such as Argentina and Chile that received large waves of immigrants from Spain, Italy and Germany; Paraguay has been far less successful in appealing to potential European immigrants. Campaigns to recruit immigrants sought out farmers and laborers to settle the Chaco. However, when Paraguay did receive immigrants, the majority had liberal professions and no experience with agriculture. Most chose to settle in Asunción and other urban areas rather than attempt to establish themselves in the Chaco (Morales Raya, 2011). The infamous failures of the Lincolnshire and Nueva Burdeos colonies also deterred potential immigrants from selecting Paraguay. Ill-equipped for life in the Chaco, Lincolnshire Farmers were eventually rescued and relocated to Argentina where they could live more comfortably (Kennett, 2013). The French Nueva Burdeos colony also failed to gain momentum. The majority of its inhabitants returned to Burdeos, France after less than a year in Paraguay (Warren, 2013). Having received relatively few immigrants, however, resulted in a tendency amongst those who did immigrate to Paraguay to learn Guaraní in order to integrate themselves into society (Morales Raya, 2001).

Although the number of total immigrants was significantly lower than in other Latin American countries, many of those who arrived (primarily Spaniards and Italians) established businesses in the capital. As a result, the economy soon became dominated by foreigners. Morales Raya (2011) explains that this position of power was reinforced in 1879, when the Paraguayan government proclaimed equality for Paraguayans and immigrants in every arena, except for public office positions

Nearly two decades after the Chaco War, Paraguay's political system entered into a new era. In 1954, General Alfredo Stroessner began what would come to be the longest uninterrupted presidency in Latin America. Stroessner ruled Paraguay with a strong arm for more than thirty-four years, using violent tactics to crush political opposition. Stroessner and the Colorado party successfully catered to the Spanish speaking elite, but placed Guaraní speakers in key positions of power in order to mobilize support from the Guaraní speaking sector (Gynan 2007). Gynan explains that Stroessner's clever tactics were not unlike his powerful predecessors' attitudes towards rural Guaraní speakers. "Stroessner's patronage of the rural peasantry is similar in effect to the government-backed Jesuit administration of the mission-based empire, Francia's expropriation of land for farmers, and the nationalist re-expropriation of land for farmers in the 1940s" (2007, p. 250). Higher rates of Guaraní monolingualism and the reduction of bilingualism after agrarian reform demonstrate Stroessner's impact on the trajectory of Guaraní (Gynan 2007). Shortly after the closure of the dictator's reign for nearly three and half decades, Paraguay became a member of Mercosur in 1991 along with Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay; marking an opening for Paraguay's economy as well as the potential for shifts in language patterns.

## Present Day Bilingualism in Paraguay

In 1992, Paraguay's new constitution incorporated a number of policy changes, including the declaration of Guaraní as a national language (once again) alongside Spanish. Even after isolationist policies that favored Guaraní were no longer necessary to ward off neighboring nations, Guaraní remained prevalent, including in the nation's

capital (Gynan, 2007). One of the few areas in which Paraguay has received international attention is from linguists (Rubin, 1968; Gynan, 2007; Hornberger, 2006) interested in the exceptionally high levels of bilingualism in Spanish and Guaraní. Most notable is the prevalence of Guaraní among non-indigenous Paraguayans, many of whom would identify as neither indigenous nor see the use of Guaraní as tied to anything inherently indigenous (Zarratea, 2013). Zarratea reports that at the time of its independence in 1811, more than 90 percent of Paraguay's population was monolingual in Paraguayan Guaraní. As of 2002, 59.2 percent of the population reported that Guaraní was the dominant language within their homes, compared to only 35.7 percent who declared Spanish as their primary home language. Gynan (2007) highlights that although as many as 80 percent of households identified as predominantly speakers of Guaraní in some parts of the country; in Asunción, 77.1 percent were predominantly Spanish-speaking, along with much of the Central Department of Paraguay.

Despite the declaration of Guaraní as a national language and widespread bilingualism, Guaraní remained (and remains) subsidiary in virtually every domain (Nickson, 2013; Gynan 2007). The panorama of language use in Paraguay is an example of Fishman's (1967) extended understanding of diglossia, with "high" and "low" status languages that are unrelated linguistically. Typically, the (H) language is used for business, commerce, and education, while the (L) language is designated for private spaces. While any knowledge of an indigenous language amongst such a high proportion of non-indigenous peoples is unique in Latin America, Guaraní has not escaped the colonial legacy of language oppression. Despite the improvements, Gynan confirms that "Guaraní is not used as the *main* vehicle of written documentation of governmental

proceedings, regulations, or proclamations and is therefore an official language in a limited sense, but has a significant nationalist function in Paraguay" (2007, p. 221). Lambert (2013) suggests that while Spanish is undeniably the language of power and commerce, Guaraní is the "language of the people," which, he argues is a characteristic "that affects Paraguayans' way of seeing and expressing the world around them and their place within it" (p. 391).

Given the apparent disconnect between the use of Guaraní and indigenous identity, what role *does* Guaraní play in defining individual and national identity for Paraguayans? Based on the understanding that the school setting is central to the process of introducing, promoting, and establishing ideologies regarding language; language instruction within the classroom setting is a good place to begin this inquiry. In the following section, bilingual education initiatives in Paraguay as well as broader models for bilingual education will be discussed.

## Bilingual Education and Language Planning

In addition to declaring Guaraní a national language, the 1992 Constitution incorporated policy changes that had a significant impact on education in Paraguay. A number of articles explicitly guaranteed support for the Guaraní language within the education system. Together, they suggest an effort on the part of policy makers to address, by some measure, centuries of oppression of Guaraní in Paraguay. However, implementation of any universal policy was complicated by the rural-urban divide and its correlation to language use. In urban areas, there are far fewer monolingual Guaraní speakers, while in 1992 (the same year that the new constitution was passed), the

majority of the population in the rural sector self-reported as monolingual in Guaraní (Gynan, 2007). For many of the children in rural households at the time, submersion in Spanish from the first year of primary school resulted in extremely high rates of dropout and low academic achievement.

It is worth noting that although the 1992 reform created a plan to address education in rural areas, the policy clearly stated that there would be no government funding for education in any of Paraguay's other indigenous languages. Paraguayan indigenous students achieve disproportionately low levels of formal education and on average, as of 2008, completed only three years of primary school, in comparison to the national average of eight years (Carregal Cazal, 2011). In an effort to respond to educational inequities for both indigenous populations and monolingual speakers of Guaraní, the 1992 constitution included the following provisions in relation to bilingual education in Paraguay.

> -*Artículo 77: De la enseñanza en la lengua materna.*
> *La enseñanza en los comienzos del proceso escolar realizará en la lengua oficial materna del educando. Se instruirá asimismo en el conocimiento y en el empleo de ambos idiomas oficiales de la República. En el caso de las minorías étnicas cuya lengua materna no sea el guaraní, se podrá elegir uno de los dos idiomas oficiales*
> -Article 77 Of Teaching in the Native [Materna] Language
> Teaching at the beginnings of the school process will be realized in the official native language of the student. They will also be instructed in the knowledge and the use of both official languages of the Republic. In the case of the ethnic minorities, whose native language is not Guarani, it will be possible to choose either of the two official languages.
> (https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Paraguay_2011.pdf).

Although the movement to formally include Guaraní in the education system may be viewed as a stride towards educational equity, this step alone was not enough to address the achievement gap. The startlingly low attrition rate among monolingual

Guaraní students is fundamentally tied to access to material resources (Gynan, 2007). Extreme disparity between schools that serve predominantly monolingual speakers of Guaraní and those that serve mostly monolingual speakers of Spanish is still apparent. A study comparing Spanish and Guaraní schools found that parents were less likely to participate in Guaraní schools, they are less likely to have a steady income, and their literacy levels are half that of Spanish-speaking parents. Guaraní-speaking children are much more likely (50 percent) to come to school not having eaten or with health problems, they are more likely to fall asleep during school, and “50% more Guaraní-speaking children have to work outside of the home, do not have school supplies, and have no place to do homework” (Gynan, 2007, p. 240). Already well aware of this phenomena by 1994, the government created the National Commission of Bilingualism and placed the new entity in charge of designing a language policy that would better serve Paraguay’s monolingual Guaraní students. The 1994 reform, despite its efforts to address issues of inequitable access to education, was caught in the quicksand between theoretical projections about bilingual education and the reality of implementation.

## Current Approaches to Bilingual Education in Paraguay

The transitional, or “bridge” approach is still the most common form of bilingual education in much of the world (Baker, 2001). Within transitional programs, students generally receive instruction in the mother tongue initially, and are then “transitioned” into instruction entirely in the language of power of the region. In the context of Latin America such policies have been a common response to concerns regarding low attrition

and academic achievement rates among rural, monolingual indigenous language speakers.

In Paraguay, transitional bilingual education modules were implemented in rural areas in hopes of providing more equitable education to monolingual speakers of Guaraní. However, given the rural-urban linguistic divide, the same approach was not applied in the urban sector. After passing the 1992 Constitution, a Guaraní curriculum was developed for all students in Paraguay, and remains in place today. In Asunción, students receive instruction in Spanish for all academic subjects, but are required to take Guaraní courses at all levels (kindergarten through the final year of high school). Guaraní classes generally meet two or three times a week for forty-five minutes to an hour. These classes are predominantly focused on the written language, and have little connection to its indigenous origins. In the following section, the theoretical frameworks and perspectives on bilingual education that informed this study are discussed at length.

# CHAPTER 3

## **Language Ideologies and Power: Students and Teachers**

This chapter covers a number of overlapping and interrelated theoretical frameworks. First, the sociocultural perspective on development (Vygotsky, 1986; Rogoff, 1995) as well as sociolinguistic perspectives on bilingual education and second language learning theories (Wortham, 2006 Hornberger, 2003; Mitchell & Myles, 1998) form a foundation for an analysis of language ideologies and processes of social identity formation. Various combinations of these approaches have been utilized in order to gain a greater understanding of language use, attitudes towards language, and power. Work published within a number of disciplines that has both questioned and advanced these concepts is also relevant in terms of their relationship to the field of bilingual and multilingual education.

### Sociocultural Perspectives on Development

This study is based on the Vygotskian (1986) principle that children's development cannot be separated from the social environment. It would be impossible to analyze these children's academic trajectories, or their understanding of their position in the world without considering the tools, cultural practices, and adults with whom they co-construct knowledge—which constitutes Vygotsky's notion of culture. Vygotsky described functions of development as first social and then internalized, and focused specifically on the ways in which this process occurs through language. Rogoff (1995) developed a different understanding of Vygotsky's "internalization", which she coined

"participatory appropriation". By integrating Bakhtin's (1981) understanding of how the language of others is incorporated and then utilized for the purpose designated by the new owner, Rogoff (1995) emphasized the active role of the learner. Rather than merely internalizing something through osmosis; participatory appropriation suggests that the learner is directly involved in this process. In other words, it is *through participation* that appropriation takes place. For Rogoff, participatory appropriation is a personal process that occurs as children engage in activities. In doing so, "individuals change and handle a later situation in ways prepared by their own participation in the previous situation. This is a process of becoming, rather than acquisition" (Rogoff, 1995).

Participatory appropriation is presented as one aspect of Rogoff's (1995) framework in which three planes of analysis are associated with different types of practices. Apprenticeship is associated with community and institutional practices, guided participation with interpersonal processes, and participatory appropriation with personal processes. All three planes are dynamic and overlapping. This framework is helpful in understanding how the complexities of the environment impact development in multiple and intersecting ways, and together influence the ways in which young people formulate social identities.

I argue that this perspective is particularly useful within the context of Guaraní lessons, in which interconnected processes of apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation are constantly at work as children struggle to create images of themselves as students and as individuals in the world. Students, through interactions with their peers and teachers, develop ideologies that reflect their experiences. This is a

part of "becoming" as Rogoff suggested, as far as it is a process through which young people shape and shift their own identities.

With that said, however, it is not only the teachers who guide this process. The ways in which students formulate social identities varies greatly because it depends on a myriad of factors. These factors include, but are not limited to: institutional dynamics determined by the state or the school, materials that are mandated or that the instructor chooses, interpersonal relationships between students and peers as well as students and teachers, and personal factors related to students' own meaning-making processes and appropriation of ideologies (Forbes, 2008).

## Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Development and Language Learning

There are a number of approaches that make fundamentally different assumptions within the realm of language learning theories. Bucholtz and Hall (2010) define sociocultural linguistics as "the broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture and society" (p. 18) While psycholinguistic approaches generally focus on the mechanisms that control language abilities and attitudes of the individual learner, the sociolinguistic perspective encompasses a broader range of environmental factors. "Here the language learning process is viewed as essentially social; both the identity of the learner and their language knowledge, are collaboratively constructed and reconstructed in the course of interaction"(Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 16). While some theorists are more concerned with the ways in which second language learning takes place through apprenticeship of language practices, others focus on the nature of the interactions that take place between expert and novice speakers, analyzing

how learners are scaffolded by teachers and peers (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Power relations are addressed to some extent by most sociolinguists, yet some theorists (Cummins, 2000; Wells, 1985; Wortham, 2006) delve deeper into the role of unequal relations of power within the context of language learning and explore the role (or the responsibility) of the educator in this process. Thus, a sociolinguistic approach is particularly helpful in understanding the language learning phenomena associated with multiple languages in contact.

## Establishing Definitions for this Study

Various definitions of bilingualism, bilingual education, second language education, multicultural education, among others, display vastly different understandings of these concepts. Establishing clear definitions is important because the names that these concepts and programs are given are often closely associated with the speaker's social and political position on the subject. My own understanding is rooted in the notion that teaching (and particularly the teaching of languages) is never neutral, but always entrenched in and infused with societal power relations (Cooper, 1989; Cummins, 2000; Baker 2001). The nature of which students are considered bilingual is complex, and often linked to political agendas. Here, I employ a very broad definition, and seek to avoid the misunderstanding that bilinguals engage in two (or more) languages in parallel ways. García (2009) uses the term *translanguaging* to describe the non-linear ways in which students code-switch and engage dynamically with multiple language systems. For this study, bilinguals are those who engage with more than one language on a regular basis, whether that engagement takes place through speaking, or in relation to writing. While

sometimes understood to refer only to reading and writing skills, Hornberger's understanding of biliteracy is similarly comprehensive. She explained that biliteracy includes occurrences of communication in more than one language, in or around writing (1997). By the same token, I have chosen a comprehensive definition of bilingual education, one that encompasses a variety of programs and pedagogical approaches to language instruction. I understand bilingual education to be any sort of educational instruction that takes place in more than one language within a formal school setting.

Admittedly, this definition encompasses what at times falls under the category of "second language education". There is often a theoretical line drawn between bilingual education and second language education. Generally, bilingual education refers to *content* instruction in more than one language; while second language education refers to instruction of the language itself as one academic subject. Mitchell and Myles (1998) defined second language learning as "the learning of any level of any language to any level, provided only that the learning of the 'second' language takes place somewhat later than the acquisition of the first language" (p. 1). They further clarified that 'second language' does not only refer to the second in terms of the order, but includes any language other than the learner's mother tongue, or L1.

I found it problematic to use content based courses as the distinguishing factor between bilingual education and second language education in this study, due to the nature of Paraguay's unique linguistic landscape as well as the approach to Guaraní instruction. While the structure of Guaraní courses mirror second language instruction in many countries, Guaraní is also incorporated (to varying degrees) in both the material and teachers' speech during the instruction of other subjects. The unique bilingualism in

Paraguay and frequent code-switching amongst Paraguayans also complicate the application of other definitions. The program in Asunción qualifies under what Baker (2001) calls a "drip-feed" approach to bilingual education, in which students receive limited exposure to the non-dominant language, generally reserved to a single class period that focuses on instruction *of* the language, rather than *in* the language. Thus, instruction in Guaraní (in the context that I observed) falls somewhere between definitions of bilingual education and second language education, and I have found theories oriented towards both fields to be relevant to this study.

## Models and Paradigms for Bilingual Education

A number of frameworks have been developed to categorize various bilingual education program designs. Perhaps the most general is the additive versus subtractive division, conceptualized in terms of general opinions towards the non-dominant language or languages. The additive perspective sees the mother tongue or non-dominant language as a resource, and develops skills in the language of power while maintaining at least some level of support for the non-dominant language (Baker, 2001). Additive bilingualism, according to Cummins' definition, includes "the form of bilingualism that results when students add a second language to their intellectual tool-kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their first language" (2000, p. 37). In other words, this approach supports the development not only of bilingualism but of biliteracy (i.e., students are provided with support in order to learn to read and write in both languages). In contrast, subtractive approaches do not provide infrastructure or develop

curriculum to support the non-dominant language within the classroom, nor do they strive to develop biliterate students.

Other forms of categorizing bilingual education programs include distinctions drawn between transition, maintenance and enrichment programs. A large quantity of bilingual education programs have been, and continue to be transitional. In many parts of the world, bilingual education programs have been designed to assimilate indigenous language speakers (or speakers of the non-dominant language) such that they learn the language of power in the region. While definitions for transitional programs vary, the underlying principle is that the mother tongue is used for instruction and then "transitioned" out, normally over the first few years of schooling and sometimes even sooner. Generally, "submersion" or 'sink or swim' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008) approaches (in which the child's mother tongue is excluded altogether from the schooling) fall within this category. When the mother tongue is used in transitional programs, it is viewed as a "bridge", a temporary fix that allows children to eventually become literate in the language of power. Maintenance programs, in contrast, often continue to incorporate the mother tongue into the curriculum, and include (to varying extents) content instruction in both the language of power and the non-dominant language such that students become biliterate.

Benefits to cognitive and social development that are associated with strong forms of bilingual education provide a powerful argument for their implementation (Lambert, 1977; Baker, 2001, Bialystok, 2011; Barac & Bialystok, 2012). Other outcomes include the development of positive perceptions of self, increased self-confidence and participation, as well as the maintenance of relationships with family members. The

benefits are most significant when programs are designed to support biliteracy development (literacy in both L1 and L2) (Hornberger, 2003; Cummins 2000; Baker, 2001).

García (2009) argues that despite the abundance of benefits associated with biliteracy, even strong, additive forms of bilingual education often fail to maximize students' bilingual potential. She explains that bilingual programs often divide language systems into separate, bounded entities, denying children with the ability to take full advantage of their complex and dynamic language skills. Based on the Foucauldian (1991) notion of *governmentality,* she describes the hierarchical structure of various languages and dialects within schools, as well as how strictly use of language is controlled. In response to what she understands to be a lack of flexibility in analyses of bilingualism and multilingual meaning-making processes, she developed a concept called 'translanguaging;' "the act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential"(García, 2009, p. 140). Rather than focusing on languages themselves, "translanguaging" focuses on the complex ways in which bilinguals make sense of the world through intentional and systematic use of multiple language systems. García (2009) expanded on Cummins' (2000) bicycle analogy to describe bilingualism. Rather than imagining two, equal languages rolling along side by side at equal speeds, independent of one another, she suggested that to refer to 21st century multilingualism, an all-terrain vehicle would provide a far better analogy. In order to describe the complicated, interrelated, overlapping nature of multiple languages practices, "We need to develop wheels that turn, extend and contract, that make up for

each other, which are able to turn in different directions – as those of an all-terrain vehicle. And we certainly need to have more than two wheels" (García 2009, p. 142-143).

While both the school and teachers themselves may organize the day such that one language is designated for certain spaces and certain subjects, students break those rules on a regular basis; they appropriate language, they use 'translanguaging' to co-construct meaning as they engage academically and socially, challenging rigid guidelines for language use as they co-construct meaning (García, 2009). The concept of 'translanguaging' is helpful in terms of questioning narrow definitions of bilingualism. However, the role of the educator in facilitating or making space for 'translanguaging' is not described. In this study, I explore the roles of educators in facilitating language use, communicating, and potentially transferring their own attitudes towards languages and language use to their students. Cummins' (2000) 'transformative pedagogy' framework is helpful in exploring the intersections between macro level sociopolitical and sociohistorical factors with micro level interactions between students and teachers. In order to do so, it is important to first examine the nature of responses to efforts to establish bilingual education programs.

## Bilingual Education: A Political Minefield

If there were ever any doubt about the connection between language policies within education and political factors, it would not take long to identify a plethora of vehement responses to bilingual education policies in countries across the globe. Ruíz (1984), in consideration of the sociopolitical nature of language planning policies, developed another framework for understanding the spectrum of approaches to bilingual

education: language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource. Both individuals and policy makers who view language as a problem identify multilingualism as a threat to a unified national identity. Xenophobic responses to bilingual education initiatives reflect deeply seeded sentiments that the use of more than one national language will lead to the eventual division of the nation. The middle ground, 'language as a right' perspective, while an improvement, does not necessarily regard multilingualism as an asset to academic and social development, rather it sees instruction in a child's mother tongue as a fundamental human right. Approaches that view language as a resource identify the potential for bilingualism and biliteracy to provide a host of benefits, both for the child herself, and her classroom and community.

It is important to understand that both support and opposition for bilingual education program are seldom rooted in facilitating communication amongst speakers of multiple languages (Cooper, 1989; Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2001). Responses to language policies are always connected to sociopolitical dynamics and struggles for power. Cummins (2009) explained,

> The sociopolitical dimensions of bilingual education derive from the fact that use of a language as a medium of instruction in state-funded school systems confers recognition and status on that language and its speakers. Consequently, bilingual education is not simply a politically neutral instructional phenomenon, but rather is implicated in national and international competition between societal groups for material and symbolic resources (p. 19).

Such powerful responses often stray far from discussing the pedagogical approach that will best support the social and cognitive development of students, rather they are couched in efforts to challenge the status quo, and efforts to maintain it. Cooper (1989) argued that rather than attempt to "solve" language problems, language planning (in

response to political and economic pushing and pulling) is generally focused on influencing or shifting language behavior in some way. Efforts to support the use of one language or another have been, and continue to be apparent in attempts to promote nationalism. Similarly, policies that discourage or even forbid the use of some languages and dialects within the education system are connected to both access to resources and efforts to encourage the use of some languages or dialects and discourage the use of others. Examples of language planning of both types are evident in Paraguay.

In addition to political factors that often dictate support or opposition of bilingual education, myths regarding bilingualism and bilingual education are couched in racist and classist views. Such perspectives are visible in the volume of misinformation regarding the link between language and intelligence, academic achievement, and overarching claims about poverty. Both overtly racist views as well as those that are merely misguided have had a significant influence on responses to bilingual education initiatives. Baker (2001) suggests that such associations between broad societal level problems and language are unfounded. Often, connections (whether explicit or implicit) are drawn between a minority language and "poverty, underachievement in school, minimal social and vocational mobility with lack of integration into the majority culture" (p. 368). The language itself is viewed as at least part of the cause for these maladies.

## Indigenous Languages and Bilingual Education

While one branch of bilingual education policies has arisen response to the increasingly multilingual landscape due to immigration, another branch is geared towards indigenous languages, often in the context of regions that have been colonized.

Transitional programs for indigenous language speakers demonstrate the legacy of unequal distribution of power across languages that was left by colonization. Amongst communities of monolingual indigenous language speakers, governments throughout the world have identified disproportionate levels of poverty and access to material resources. In response to low levels of attrition, many have chosen to implement transitional programs such that young people learn the language of the power of the region, but begin with instruction in their mother tongue. Indigenous communities have also been very active in seeking out ways to improve their quality of life. Bilingual education initiatives have been one aspect of such efforts (Gustafson, 2009).

Struggles over power are almost always related to access to material resources. Jones and Singh Guhman (1995) describe, based on their analysis of bilingual education in Wales, that even in a more affluent context, material benefits associated with the non-dominant language. When one of the two (or more) languages is non-dominant, "then the amount of support for bilingualism will be affected, on the one hand, by the perceived utilitarian advantages of the majority language and, on the other hand, by the more non-material values of the minority language which are based on identity and tradition" (p. 6). Without infrastructure to support access to employment and other tangible benefits of developing literacy in the non-dominant language, opposition from parents and educators has been a common phenomenon across the globe. Bernard (1996) argued that in the case of many indigenous languages, speakers abandon their language for economic reasons. According to Bernard, in order to revitalize marginalized languages that have been oppressed by colonization, there must be infrastructure developed such that the language provide economic benefits, even if it is to a small number of speakers, such as paying

writers and establishing indigenous publishing businesses (1996). The commoditization of language is a delicate subject, and one that I will return to in the final chapter.

Within the context of Paraguay, attitudes towards language reflect both colonial discourses and the intersection between language and power. The tendency to associate the use of Guaraní with poverty and limited intelligence is apparent in discourses surrounding language use, both on macro and micro scales. The connection between Guaraní and poverty is not totally unfounded, rather it is the misunderstanding of the nature of this relationship that is misinterpreted. Undeniably, there are many Paraguayans living in rural parts of Paraguay who are speakers of Guaraní, and are disproportionately poor (when compared to monolingual Spanish speakers, or bilinguals). It is not the language that dictates poverty, rather it is the resources that are often limited in regions in dominated by historically oppressed populations. In Paraguay, these populations include, but are not limited to Paraguayans of indigenous and African descent and monolingual speakers of Guaraní. The vestiges of colonialism are evident in the tendency to misunderstand this connection and make assumptions regarding the intelligence and capabilities of speakers of Guaraní. Despite the prevalence of Guaraní and the tendency to code-switch under certain circumstances, attitudes towards Guaraní reflect underlying beliefs amongst many Paraguayans that of the two languages, Spanish is more prestigious. Extended use of Guaraní, in contrast, is associated with a lower social class. Such attitudes are evident in Paraguayans explicit reflections on both languages. This type of metalanguage not only elucidates individuals' perspectives regarding the value of a language, its purpose and level of prestige; it also highlights the ways in which people

both shape and are shaped by societal level discourses about language. In the following section, these outlooks are explored further.

## Language Ideologies and Metalanguage as Analytical Tools

Kathryn Woolard (1998) defines language ideologies as "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (p. 3). These representations are dictated by the web of sociohistorical and sociopolitical factors that influence attitudes towards different languages. The concept of language ideologies is helpful for understanding that what people feel and say regarding languages, both molds and reflects societal level power relations (González 2001).

The literature on language ideologies in multilingual contexts and within school settings revealed broad patterns amongst bilingual students and attitudes towards languages in situations of diglossia. Relevant research by González (2001, 2003), Moll (2002), and Forbes (2008) regarding language ideologies and identity amongst Mexican-origin students was particularly helpful in highlighting such patterns, and providing a comparison to those that emerged amongst the participants in this study.

In addition to examining the unique nature of bilingualism in Paraguay, I was also interested in exploring attitudes towards language revealed through both patterns of language use and talk about language itself. Patterns of language use (such as decisions about when or how to code switch, and which language is deemed appropriate for a given situation or setting) reveal aspects of language ideologies that the speaker may be unaware of. Clearly, a speaker's decision *not* to speak Guaraní when he or she is capable of doing so says something about his or her language identity, and his or her experiences

in the society. However, in order to have more accurate understanding of outlooks on language, it is also necessary to analyze discourses surrounding Spanish and Guaraní, and to explore students' and teachers' metalanguage (talk about language itself). Explicit reflections, whether spoken or written, provide another window into the individual's own understanding of the intersections of language and power. The combination of language ideologies that structure the language practices in the classroom (through passing comments, choice of language, willingness to code switch, tone of voice, body language, etc.) and metalanguage (explicit commentary on language) allows for a multidimensional analysis of use and attitudes.

Language ideologies are also a useful analytical tool for understanding the dynamic processes of language socialization. In the context of Mexican origin students in the United States, González (2001) highlights that while individual agency is inherent in the process of language socialization, there are countless factors that contribute to the ways in which students come to see value in a language and develop patterns of language use. "Language is not simply a vehicle of communication, but the site of a highly politicized and vitriolic debate concerning the nature of who speaks what language under what circumstances. No nonambiguous system of social or linguistic knowledge is transmitted to children" (p. 54). While students have the potential to exercise agency choosing how and when to engage in which languages, there are certain limits to what ideologies towards language and patterns of use they are likely to develop (González, 2001). By examining what children say about learning a language and the language itself, we can gain insight into the intersection between macro level forces, micro level

interactions and the power that pervades every interaction within the context of formal education.

Because students are exposed to discourses surrounding language within every interaction, there are a number of methodological questions that are raised by limiting the analysis to the classroom. Clearly students' language ideologies are influenced by their interactions with their families and community members with whom they interact on a daily basis. Particularly due to the amount of time that a child spends with parents or caretakers, this would arguably be the most fruitful environment to explore the ways in which children develop certain attitudes towards languages.

However, Moll (2002) found that children's language ideologies, rather than congruent with those of their parents, had more to do with their relationships at school. Methodologically, the school provides a bounded environment to observe. Within the classroom, power is enacted both around and through discourses about language (not just what is said about language, but what is said in general, and *how* it is said). While the factors that influence students' attitudes towards language are very complex, teachers play a critical role in creating an environment that allows students to engage through multilingual language practices and to either challenge or reinforce broader power relations (Cummins, 2000). Their role as significant shapers of language ideologies is particularly important because of the nature of the relationship between language use and identity formation. The intersection of language and identity is addressed in the following section.

## Language and Social Identity

Languages practices are closely tied to both academic and social identity. Social identification and academic learning take place at the same time in the context of the classroom (Wortham, 2006). Wortham argues that these processes occur across both short time scales (at the local level, through interactions with teachers and students) and long time scale (at a macro, societal level scale). Rather than attempting the impossible task of detangling academic from social processes, Wortham (2006) suggests that we recognize that schooling is an inherently "moral enterprise" (p. 267). The ways in which knowledge (both "academic" and social) is presented to students is fundamentally connected to use of language, and to ideas about language. Moll (2002) eloquently explains the power of this juncture,

> Language ideologies are always involved in the process of students' personal production, that is the process of producing who they are as human beings. Children form their intersubjectivities, who they are, their personalities, and reconstitute them using the cultural resources and social processes available to them. These subjectivities are always fluid and simultaneously deeply singular, for no two kids have identical social histories. And they are deeply social for they are always embedded in particular systems of social interaction.

In other words, social factors both influence and limit the ways in which students formulate their identities. However, students also employ language practices in creative ways to negotiate meaning. In doing so, they both shape their own identities and question social constraints.

James Paul Gee (2008, 2001-2001) developed a different understanding of identity, one that is fundamentally tied to the notion of discourses. He argues (2008) that analyzing Discourses ("with a capital D") is necessary in order to examine language

within social context and its influence on identity formation. Discourses, for Gee, include,

> ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantations of particular identities or ("types of people") by specific groups…They are "ways of being in the world"; they are "forms of life"; they are socially situated identities. They are, thus, always and everywhere social products of social histories (2008, p. 3).

While I find Gee's understanding of the relationship between discourses and identity helpful, I have focused on the ways in which students see themselves in the world; their self-attributed identities, rather than those that are imposed on them by others. I argue that the ways in which students come to see themselves as, for example, smart, good students, class clowns, or contentious individuals, is rooted in discourses that take place through and about languages.

Unequal power relations that are enacted through discourses in the classroom, are particularly delicate in the context of language learning. Based on studies of a variety of second language learning environments, Mitchell and Myles (1998) concluded that those power relations have the potential to "control both learners overall opportunities and willingness to take part in L2 interactions" (p. 167). However, in addition to impacting their decisions regarding language *use,* students' interpretations of those dynamics also influence the ways in which they come to see themselves as students and as individuals in the world. The concept of social identity, as developed by Tajfel (1974), is perhaps limiting in a certain sense because it is based on the ways in which individuals develop certain self-perceptions through group membership. While focusing on the role of language in this process, it is important to examine the nature of social identity as

multifaceted and fluid. Mitchell and Myles (1998) describe social identity as rooted not only in group membership (such as language, ethnicity, or a social activities), but also as subject to shift in response to micro interactions. These identities and attitudes “are dynamic, negotiable, socially contextualized, and subject to change, even within the framework of individual interactions” (1998, p. 170). In other words, the ways in which young people are exposed to discourses about language and choose to engage in language themselves, is fundamentally connected to both who they are, and understandings of their role in the world around them. Both societal level patterns of power distribution *and* real time, micro interactions shape this process (Wortham, 2006).

## Transformative Pedagogy and the Role of the Educator

What does all of this mean for educators? More specifically, what are the implications for educators engaging in multilingual classrooms, and those whose primary goal is language instruction? If the connection between language, development, and academic and social identity are as powerful as they seem; educators are in a very powerful position. Students who are engaging in multilingual settings, negotiating various semiotic systems as they co-construct meaning, are perhaps in a particularly precarious position in the context of school. Cummins (2000) described how bilingual children are constantly “in the crossfire” of sociopolitical battles and issues of power in the surrounding society. He concludes that bilingual students’ interactions with educators are directly connected to their success (or lack thereof) in school (Cummins, 2000, p. 6). Teachers, based on their understanding of the distribution of power as it relates to

sociohistorical events and the current sociopolitical climate, have the potential to either reinforce, or challenge macro level power relations (Cummins, 2000).

It is important to highlight that the students are not merely observers of this process. While the role of educators is critical, students' language learning and appropriation of academic and social identities does not occur through osmosis. These processes are dynamic, and require students to negotiate the meaning of the discourses that surround them, and to co-construct understandings of social practices and patterns (Rogoff, 1995).

Freire (1970) describes the concept of *banking education,* in which students' are viewed as receptacles of sorts, in which information is deposited by educators. Particularly within the field of language education, this approach, centered around the memorization of discrete pieces of information (with little focus on contextualizing concepts, and less still on students' meaning-making) has been, and continues to be common. By excluding students from this process, the potential to challenge coercive power relations is greatly diminished. Within the context of second language or bilingual instruction, this is often evident in the emphasis on grammatical structures and orthography. However, based on a Vygotskian perspective on development, "the prime symbolic tool available for the mediation of mental activity is, of course, language" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145). Here, Rogoff's (1995) understanding of participatory appropriation (rather than internalization) is useful. If students are actively encouraged to engage in critical inquiry, to draw connections, and to question the social structures that influence their language ideologies, the language classroom becomes a context for empowerment.

Wells (1985) suggests that the ways in which children engage in meaning making in their first language, occurs through very similar mechanisms for second, third, or fifth languages. Language learning allows children to "create alternative 'possible worlds' through words" (p. 72). Through the experience of collaborating with adults and peers to explore these 'possible worlds', language is seen not as the only goal, but as a vehicle through which to access new ideas and perspectives. Thus, educators are responsible not for simply transmitting information, but for creating an environment that is conducive to critical inquiry.

Cummins' (2000) 'transformative pedagogy' framework, González's (2001) understanding of "critical discourse'", and Moll's (2002) description of 'educational sovereignty' are helpful in theorizing the roles of teachers in this process. Cummins explained that the role of power, both on macro and micro levels, is critical in understanding the intersection of language use, language ideologies, and a critical pedagogy. Micro-interactions between teachers and students create "an interpersonal space within which the acquisition of knowledge and formation of identity is negotiated. Power is created and shared within this interpersonal space where minds and identities meet" (Cummins, 2000, p. 44). Acknowledging both their potential to influence students' identity formation, as well as the coercive power structures that exist, educators should recognize that those interactions are never neutral (Cummins, 2000; Baker 2001). A transformative pedagogy is one that facilitates students' empowerment through the "collaborative creation of power", which takes place when classroom interactions between teachers and students are connected to issues relevant to students' experiences and social issues in their communities.  In doing so, educators guide students to challenge

their own understanding of social issues, developing a sense of self rooted in "collaborative critical inquiry", while simultaneously developing language and literacy skills necessary to challenge unequal power relations (Cummins, 2000, p. 246).

While Cummins' (2000) framing of transformative pedagogy is discussed in large part in relation to students who are speakers of a non-dominant language in their community, this principle can be extended to second language instruction in general, and to Guaraní instruction in Paraguay. What better place than in a classroom in which students are developing literacy skills in Guaraní, a language that has been historically oppressed, for students to question the role of language and access to social and material capital within their society? With scaffolding from educators, students can begin to inquire about the nature of the relationship between Guaraní and poverty, and to explore the potential to challenge the status quo.

Similarly, González (2001) utilizes a Bakhtinian (1981) understanding of language as "populated" with other speakers' intentions. She elaborates that if young people take pieces of language they have been exposed (that are "populated" with intentions) than interactions within the school environment both build and mirror social norms. González describes "critical discourse" by articulating the critical junctures that take place during each interaction between students and teachers.

> Teachers can *create* through language the worlds that children inhabit in the classroom. The individual and the sociohistorical come together in every interaction…teachers have a generative power at their disposal, a power that can be wielded at every moment of contact (González 2001, p. 186).

Moll's (2002) understanding of 'educational sovereignty' overlaps in a number of ways. Within this framework, educators must also be aware of sociohistorical structures

that continue to create patterns of inequity, particularly those that influence access to education. He also highlights the importance of promoting agency amongst students. Academic teaching and learning are viewed as one aspect of a broader goal to engage in collaborative efforts to promote change (Moll, 2002).

Based on the understanding that academic learning and social identification occur simultaneously within the classroom, educators are in a position to influence development across multiple planes. Wortham emphasizes, “given that schooling is inevitably also about building communities and changing who students are, educators face questions about what kinds of students, communities, and practices they should aim to create” (2006, p. 286-287). The hope is that educators work to construct environments that facilitate critical inquiry through discourses about the intersection of languages and broader societal issues. Of equal importance is that they recognize their potential to either reinforce or question societal level power relations, establishing a space for students to both formulate positive academic identities and recognize their ability to create change. In the following chapter, I will discuss methodological approaches that were used in order to analyze the unique sociolinguistic environment of Asunción, Paraguay, and educators’ role in facilitating critical inquiry.

# CHAPTER 4

## **Methodology**

This chapter is focused on the research design and methodological approach of this study. First, it provides a description of the primary research questions and goals of this research. In the following section, the selection of participants and details regarding the methods that were utilized for data collection are described at length.

### Research Questions

The goal of this study was to explore the correlation between language ideologies, societal level power relations and micro-level interactions in the classroom. I address the following questions:

1) What sort of patterns of language use and language ideologies exist amongst students and teachers in Asunción?

2) What is the nature of the relationship between teachers' language ideologies and those of their students?

3) How do teachers' classroom practices during the instruction of Guaraní impact their students' processes of academic and social identity formation?

### Methodological Approaches

This study is grounded in the understanding that through language and interactions with the social environment; young people co-construct knowledge as they develop both cognitively and socially (Vygotsky, 1986). Children, rather than being

inculcated with information, actively make meaning of language and other tools for development through processes of apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation (Rogoff, 1995). Due to the sociocultural and sociolinguistic foundation of this study, it was necessary to analyze not only students' and teachers' language, but also their language within the environment. While children's surroundings outside of the classroom also play a significant role, this study focused on the context of Guaraní classes. Consistent with González (2001, 2003), Moll (2002), and Joseph (2010), a mixed approach was the best method to gain a greater understanding of children's language practices and language ideologies.

The primary methodological approaches included classroom observations, survey reports of language use and attitudes, and unstructured interviews with students and teachers. The research design was informed by studies of language ideologies and social identity (González, 2001, 2003; Woolard, 1998; Tajfel, 1974; Wortham, 2006; Gee 2000-2001, 2008). Classroom observations provided a window into language practices and ideologies that students and teachers may be unaware of. Surveys and unstructured interviews, however, created an opportunity for students to self-report patterns of language use and attitudes towards Spanish, Guaraní, and other languages to which they are exposed.

Site and Participant Selection

As I mentioned in the first chapter, Asunción was an unusual selection for a study that addresses bilingual education policy and practice. Studies that examine indigenous languages within bilingual education are often focused on monolingual speakers of the

minority language, often those who live in rural areas. Rather than selecting a rural population of monolingual speakers of Guaraní, I opted to explore language ideologies amongst urban youth who are dominant in Spanish. My hope was to gain a greater understanding of how members of Asunción's middle class conceptualize the role of Guaraní in their lives, and their perspectives on speakers of Guaraní.

The school was selected on the basis of being a private, average size primary and secondary school, with approximately eight hundred students enrolled and sixty teachers on staff. Due to the nature of education in Paraguay, most middle class families opt to enroll their children in private schools. Based on the 2012 census report, 34% of students ages six and seventeen in Asunción attend private schools, while 53.8% attend public schools. While participants in this study represent a specific demographic, they do not represent the elite sector of society.

The student participants range in age from eight to fifteen years old. The teachers who participated in the study range in age from twenty six to forty five. The majority of the student participants come from relatively homogenous (middle-income) socioeconomic backgrounds. Based on conversations with the school's principal, the vast majority of the students were born in Asunción and the area surrounding the capital. There are, however, a number of international students from nations including Brazil, Argentina, Germany, and Taiwan. Altogether, there are less than twenty students enrolled who were not born in Paraguay.

In addition to Guaraní language instruction, the school's curriculum includes language instruction of English for all students, as well as Portuguese for those who choose. This also played a role in the selection process. The school's multilingual

curriculum suggests that many students come from families who value multilingualism. However, based on a study of students living in the borderlands of Tucson, Arizona, Moll (2002) concluded that language ideologies are not passed directly from parents to children. His findings suggest that even amongst students whose parents explicitly acknowledged the importance of Spanish for their children, negative associations with Spanish are common. Focusing on classroom interactions within an environment that, at least in theory, supports and values multilingualism, provides an opportunity to explore whether Moll's conclusions extend to a distinct historical, geographical, and social context.

## Data Collection

Research that I conducted in Peru, Bolivia, and Paraguay during the summer of 2013 helped me to establish a broader understanding of bilingual education in South America. It was during this period that I realized (having grounded my focus on language ideologies) that I would have to return to Paraguay in order to collect additional data. Contacts that I had made during my first trip to Paraguay in 2005 suggested a few possible schools, and offered to facilitate the process of introductions once I selected a site. After conducting some initial research on the location and demographics of the schools, I selected *Ecolegio 31*, which met my basic requirements of a middle-range private school in Asunción. I returned to Asunción in March of 2014 with a crystallized picture of what it was that I was looking for, and how I would go about examining it. Upon arrival, I traveled to *Ecolegio 31* in order to introduce myself to the *directora*

(principal) as well as the school's *coordinadoras* (coordinators) and to provide them with extended explanations of the study and research permission forms.

Prior to my arrival, the principle of the school agreed to participate in the study and introduced the goals and methods of the study to the teachers who would be involved. I observed Guaraní lessons in two sections of fourth through eighth grade classrooms (eight classrooms in total). In the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, although the majority of the observations took place during Guaraní lessons, these teachers instruct their students in all academic subjects. Observations of Guaraní classes for seventh and eighth grade students, however, were taught by an instructor who teaches solely Guaraní. These students move from classroom to classroom throughout the day and are instructed by a different teacher for each academic subject. In both cases, however, students have Guaraní class for one hour, twice a week. All classrooms are composed of students who, according to their teachers' descriptions, are dominant in Spanish, and exposed to varying levels of Guaraní at home. A number of classes included one to three students who were born outside of Paraguay and whose dominant language is neither Spanish nor Guaraní.

Observations took place over the course of two weeks, totaling approximately forty hours. Most of the observations occurred during Guaraní classes. In some cases, however, I observed English classes and free-time activities as well. This allowed me to compare students' participation patterns and attitudes during English classes, and to observe the ways in which they utilize language during unstructured activities, and in communication with friends. Informal interviews took place with students during recess immediately after school. Interviews with teachers were conducted during classroom activities as well as students' lunch and recess periods. The process of gathering data

was an iterative one. As I spoke with students and began to identify patterns in use and attitudes amongst students, I adjusted questions and at times, shifted my approach.

During the first day that I spent on site, one of the *coordinadoras* (coordinators), Elsa, introduced me to the seventh and eighth grade Guaraní teacher, Mirta, as well as a number of the primary school teachers whose classes I would observe in the following weeks. Upon entering the classroom on the first day, I was introduced by Mirta as "*una visita especial quien vino de lejos para estudiar nuestro idiom*a" (a special visitor who came from far away to study our language). While this was not exactly accurate, I greeted the students in Spanish and gave a brief explanation of the study. Mirta followed up my introduction by reminding the students that they should refrain from saying "*no entiendo*" or "*no hablo guaraní*" (I don't understand or I don't speak Guaraní). This was, of course, somewhat ironic. It was students' attitudes towards Guaraní that I was most interested in observing, and I wanted to avoid any tendency for them to shift their language patterns, or to misrepresent their language ideologies in an effort to please me. Without drawing too much attention to the issue, I attempted to distance myself from the image of someone who was assessing the students' performance, or that I had any sort of biases surrounding Guaraní.

I was also acutely aware of the teachers' feelings regarding my presence in their classrooms. As a teacher myself, I know the feeling of having another educator in the room whether the goal is to assess my teaching or something else altogether. Regardless of their good intentions or kind demeanor, being observed is rather stressful. Although I could not eliminate the potential for this to influence teachers' language use or their interactions with students, I reiterated that my goal was not to assess them.

<u>Classroom Observations and Unstructured Interviews</u>

During observations, I sat at a desk at the back of the classroom for the duration of the period. In a number of instances (such as the one I described above) the teacher introduced me to the classroom before beginning the lesson. For most of the students at *Ecolegio 31,* interactions with *extranjeros* (foreigners) are relatively uncommon. Given that, students were very curious about my presence and were anxious to ask me whether I know pop stars, if I ride on the subway, or if New York really looks the way that it does in the movies. Because I observed the same classes multiple times, the novelty faded after the initial meeting and I was able to sit at the back of the classroom relatively unnoticed. Mirta, the Guaraní teacher for the seventh and eighth grade students, was extremely helpful and was kind enough to allow me to sit in on all four of her classes (two of each grade) numerous times during the two week period.

Observations of the younger groups were slightly different. Due to the fact that these children have one primary teacher for all subjects, Guaraní classes take place in the same classroom.  Teachers' approaches to my presence varied significantly. While some of them introduced me (or encouraged me to introduce myself) others preferred to avoid the potential to lose time or distract the children, and simply showed me a seat at the back of the room before beginning the lesson

In a number of classrooms, Guaraní takes place either just before or just after recess, providing a time in which I could chat with both students and teachers in Spanish. Generally, these were unstructured interviews, in which I asked open ended questions and allowed students and teachers to take the conversation in the direction of their choice.  I asked questions such as, "What do you think about Guaraní?" allowing students to

interpret whether I referred to the class, the language in general, or their own use of the language. I also asked students their opinions regarding the other languages of instruction in their school (Spanish, English and Portuguese). In my conversations with teachers, I asked similarly open ended questions regarding their opinions towards languages. I also inquired about their own experiences with Guaraní, (whether they had spoken Guaraní during their childhood or learned later on in order to obtain their teaching certifications). In addition, I prompted teachers to give their opinions regarding both students' use of Guaraní at home and in the classroom, and their perceptions of students' attitudes regarding Guaraní class and the language in general. This was an important aspect of gaging teachers' attitudes about the language itself, but also about their interpretations of students' language practices and language ideologies. Given the context and short duration of these conversations, they were not recorded. I took detailed field notes during each conversation and often asked clarifying questions, or repeated what I had heard in order to ensure that I had noted comments correctly.

Translating and Limitations

Unless otherwise noted, translations from Spanish to English are my own. It is important to clarify that although I am very comfortable speaking, Spanish, I do not speak Guaraní. This had a significant impact on my research design and data collection process. During observations as well as interviews, I was unable to understand the vast majority of the Guaraní that was spoken or written around me. Clearly, this resulted in a number of limitations. Translating, while a powerful tool for sharing ideas and information, inevitably falls short of effectively communicating the nuances of one

semiotic system to another. The assumption that translating captures every aspect of meaning, fails to incorporate the relationship between words and the environment (Bakhtin, 1981). Of equal importance, the emotional weight of a word or phrase may be significantly different than that of the same words in another language, even when linguistically, they refer to the same item or concept (González, 2001). Acknowledging the limitations and recognizing that ideally I would be fluent in Guaraní as well, I still believe that there is value in this inquiry into students' and teachers' language ideologies. The details of what is communicated in speech and writing *through* language are critical to understanding attitudes towards language, particularly those that the speaker or writer may be unconscious of. Due to the fact that I was not able to understand the nuances of words in Guaraní, I focused instead on the contexts in which participants chose to code switch. In informal interviews with students and teachers, I often requested that they translate phrases that were used in Guaraní to Spanish, and asked why they selected Guaraní for expressing that particular idea or sentiment.

More important to this study, however, were the ways in which students and teachers talked about language; the metalanguage that surround language use and speakers of the given language. In addition to providing insight into societal level discourses about language in Paraguay, I hoped that this approach, (not just speaking *through* language but also talking *about* language) could create a space for students and teachers to reflect on their own language ideologies. Simultaneously, I anticipated that those reflections would help me to better understand how the participants were processing the reasons behind their attitudes.

Surveys

In seven out of the eight classrooms, students completed a survey on their language use. Students were asked to mark the box (one for each section) that best corresponded to the frequency with which they use Guaraní and Spanish. The first section involved the language(s) used by various individuals and groups (grandparents, mother, father, siblings, friends outside of school, neighbors, cashiers, friends at school, and teachers) to speak with the students. The second portion required students to report their *own* language use with the same list of people that were included in the first section. The following section asked students to respond (on the same frequency scale) regarding the language they use or are exposed to when they engage in a number of daily activities such as reading, talking on the phone, sending text messages, or playing sports. Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades completed an additional survey that asked them to rate their level of interest in languages, bilingual education, and social change. In total, 214 student surveys were collected

## Data Analysis

The sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspective and the nature of the data required a mixed methods approach for analysis. I coded survey data using Microsoft Excel, which I then imported into STATA software for statistical analysis and data management. Field notes from classroom observations and interviews were then transcribed. After importing survey data and field notes, I created a coding system that would help me further explore patterns in the data. This process was a dynamic one. Some codes had been created a priori, such as expressions of nationalism or Paraguayan

identity. Upon initial examination of the data, however, codes were both adjusted and eliminated in order to fine tune the analysis. I had not anticipated, for example, the frequency with which students and teachers reference difficulties with learning Guaraní. A number of patterns emerged both in terms of participants' language use and language ideologies. STATA software was helpful for analyzing survey data and identifying similarities amongst students' language use with various audiences, in a variety of settings. Classroom observations and conversations with the participants allowed me to explore those patterns, and to delve further into attitudes towards Guaraní, Spanish, English and Portuguese. In the following section I will discuss the principle findings in terms of language practices and attitudes towards language.

CHAPTER 5

# Findings

The analysis of the survey data, interviews, and observations revealed a number of patterns. Analysis of students' language practices is based on self-reported survey data, as well as observed patterns of code-switching, and informal interviews. For teachers, however, this portion of the analysis is based largely on classroom observations in conjunction with unstructured interviews. A reflection on attitudes towards Guaraní and Spanish as well as those related to Portuguese and English amongst teachers will be followed by those of students. Lastly, the relationship between teachers' and students' language ideologies is discussed.

Prior to conducting fieldwork, I had hypothesized that students' use of Guaraní would reflect a generational shift towards monolingualism in Spanish. Conversations with students and teachers revealed (as would be expected) that in addition to a generational shift, rural to urban migration was also correlated with less frequent use of Guaraní, even in the home. Based on Fishman's (1967) understanding of diglossia and the time I have spent in Paraguay over the years, I anticipated that Guaraní would be more commonly designated to the private sphere and informal interactions, while Spanish would dominate formal spaces. As in other situations of diglossia, the tendency to designate one language for communication in informal settings is not only noteworthy in terms of language use, but also reveals underlying perspectives on the value and prestige associated with that language and its speakers (Fishman, 1967). Thus, the use of Guaraní

and Spanish reflects an overarching tendency amongst both students and teachers to hold Spanish in higher esteem than Guaraní.

The literature reviewed in Chapter Three on the role of teachers in influencing bilingual students' academic trajectories as and social identities (Cummins 2000; Baker, 2001; González 2000) informed my hypotheses regarding this relationship amongst the participants in this study. The literature consistently highlighted that teaching (particularly when language is the subject) is never neutral. However, while there is an emphasis on the potential for educators to either challenge or reinforce broader social power relations (Cummins, 2000), less information is available regarding the results of this approach on students' attitudes. Moll (2002) found that students' language ideologies were not closely connected to their parents' attitudes towards language, and were more closely correlated to relationships with classmates and peers at school. Given that teachers play a significant role in establishing the classroom dynamic, norms of conduct, and language use, this study examines the connection between teachers' perspectives on language and those of the students in their classrooms. In the following section, I will describe results regarding patterns of language use, attitudes towards Guaraní, Spanish, English and Portuguese, and the relationship between teachers' and students' language ideologies.

## Patterns of Language Use

Participants' language use revealed complex patterns of code-switching and 'translanguaging' (García, 2009). Both students and teachers reported that the environment and audience influence their decisions to engage in multiple language systems in diverse ways. Language practices also varied between the context of the

classroom and less formal communication outside of the classroom. Although the use of language that was observed and self-reported varied, a number of patterns emerged. Both teachers and students utilize Guaraní to establish or demonstrate membership of certain social groups. Communication that includes Guaraní is more common in familiar settings, and is connected to efforts to communicate closeness between the speakers and their audiences. Lastly, the use of Guaraní is closely related to personal experiences with the language as well as the extent to which the individual has been exposed to the language in the past. In summary, three themes were influence the participants' use of Guaraní

1) Desire to establish group membership

2) Efforts to communicate familiarity and/or intimacy

3) Levels of exposure/personal experiences with the language.

<u>Language Use amongst Teachers</u>

Teachers' language practices and patterns of Guaraní use varied significantly. While all of the teachers used Spanish frequently during Guaraní lessons, some made concerted efforts to provide explanations in Guaraní rather than translate. Others, however, relied almost entirely on translating material from Guaraní to Spanish or vice versa. The frequency of Spanish use during the lessons did not seem to be correlated to students' age or grade level, as I had initially anticipated. While some teachers relied heavily on translations, others pushed students to think about the context of the unknown word or phrase, providing scaffolding in the form of synonyms or extended explanations in Guaraní. Those teachers, when all else failed, encouraged the students to look up the

word in their Spanish-Guaraní dictionaries rather than simply providing the equivalent word or phrase in Spanish.

In addition to analyzing patterns of language use amongst teachers within the context of Guaraní classes, I was also interested in how teachers used Guaraní throughout the school day. Outside of the designated period of Guaraní instruction, amongst fourth, fifth, and sixth grade teachers, a few used Guaraní from time to time throughout the day when they gave instructions, or offered words of encouragement to their students. Other teachers, however, *only* used Guaraní during the designated class period. This decision is closely tied to teachers' individual attitudes towards Guaraní. One teacher commented that she makes an effort to use Guaraní regularly during the day in hopes that her students (particularly those who are exposed to very little Guaraní at home) will begin to become more familiar with the language. She explained that while some students struggled in the beginning when she would tell them to take out their pencils and notebooks in Guaraní, they had grown accustomed to her approach and now knew the appropriate responses.

I observed another teacher who consistently repeated the same few words in Guaraní in her interactions with her students. When I inquired about their meaning, she explained that they are terms of endearment and encouragement. This decision suggests an understanding of the connection between familiar relationships, or those that are characterized by closeness. In other words, this teacher has identified that by using Guaraní to congratulate her students or urge them to keep working, she is reinforcing a close, caring connection in a way that could not be replicated by making the same comments in Spanish. This approach may be linked to underlying perspectives regarding the role that Guaraní should play in the education system. Those teachers who

incorporate Guaraní into other portions of the curriculum were also more likely to challenge students to make meaning of Guaraní. In contrast, the opposing approach (using Spanish exclusively as the point of reference) was common amongst teachers who described negative opinions regarding the requirement to incorporate Guaraní into the curriculum.

I was also curious as to whether teachers' language use patterns within the classroom reflected their language use in communication outside of the classroom. During conversations with me, teachers used Spanish almost entirely, knowing that I do not understand Guaraní. I noticed that when communicating with other teachers, however, this was not the case. Some glided deftly back and forth between the two languages, while others used only Spanish. Those who code switched more frequently did so when communicating with coworkers in a friendlier, less formal fashion, further suggesting the correlation between Guaraní and relationships characterized by familiarity or closeness. For example, one day I noted that when discussing an upcoming get together for the first through sixth grade teachers in the teachers' lounge area, a number of teachers used both languages interchangeably, as they laughed and discussed the details regarding who would pick who up at what time. The use of Guaraní, it seemed, played a role in establishing the register of communication, as well as membership of the group of teachers who regularly socialize with one another. When the coordinator for the older students entered the room, the group shifted to Spanish, although they continued to converse about their plans.

It is difficult to determine the reasons behind the teachers' decision (in the instance mentioned above) to shift their conversation to monolingual Spanish when the

coordinator entered the room. Most likely, it was based on a combination of factors. Baker (2001) suggests that code switching can serve many purposes, but some of the most common include: emphasis of a point, substituting when a word is unknown, expressing a concept that does not have an equivalent in the other language, reinforcing a request, clarifying a point, communicating friendship or connection, retelling a conversation that was held in that language, interjecting or shifting a conversation, easing tension or adding humor, representing a change in attitude or relationship (towards familiarity, for example, excluding people from the conversation, and discussing specific topics (p. 102-104). We might assume then, that decisions *not* to code switch, may overlap, but also include a number of additional factors, particularly in relation to the power and prestige associated with each language and perceptions of power and prestige of the speaker(s) and/or audience. In the example that I mentioned above, teachers may have switched to Spanish based on their perceptions regarding the coordinator's proficiency in Guaraní. They may have wanted to reinforce group membership by using Guaraní, and Spanish to infer either respect or distance. This interaction, in conjunction with a number of similar observations, suggests that use of Guaraní serves as a tool for inclusion and exclusion from certain social groups.

Teachers' language practices are also influenced by their individual experiences with and exposure to Guaraní. Some teachers disclosed that they spoke very little Guaraní prior to the training that they received in order to become educators. Of this group, most admitted that learning Guaraní had been challenging for them. Others described experiences speaking Guaraní with their parents as children, or having traveled regularly to *el interior* (rural areas) where they were required to speak Guaraní in order to

communicate with family members or other children. Not surprisingly, teachers from the latter group were more likely to encourage students to seek connections between the curriculum for Guaraní and the students' own lives. These teachers also incorporated more Guaraní into their speech throughout the school day.

Given the societal level discourse that Spanish is the language of power and prestige, while Guaraní is the language of familiar, informal communication, patterns of language use amongst teachers reflected largely parallel understandings. Teachers are willing to use Guaraní during Guaraní class in order to comply with the curriculum, yet few use Guaraní in other contexts, nor did they encourage students to do so. Those who do extend use of Guaraní throughout the school day, while reinforcing close relationships with students, fall short of challenging the notion of Guaraní as a language reserved for informal interactions.

## Language Use amongst Students

The data regarding students' language use revealed overlapping patterns. Use of Guaraní to engage in certain activities suggests that Guaraní is connected with establishing membership within certain circles. Language use is also dictated by the type of relationship that students wish to convey with their audiences. Guaraní is often used to communicate familiarity and high levels of comfort or intimacy. Young people, when chatting with close friends, family members, or neighbors, use words and phrases in Guaraní more frequently than they do in formal settings. Students also engage in Guaraní more often if they are exposed to Guaraní in their homes.

Survey data of self-reported language use showed that students are speaking even less Guaraní than I had anticipated. Students' reports confirmed observations which reflected a tendency to use Guaraní more frequently in the private sphere (with family members, neighbors, and friends outside of school), while Spanish dominated the public sphere (areas such as the school, banks, and offices). Results also reveal that students speak Guarani far less frequently than they are spoken to in Guarani, with the difference in the two means being statistically significant at one percent level. Thus, even when students are spoken to in Guaraní, they often choose to respond in Spanish. Outside of school, students reported using very little Guaraní to engage in activities such as reading, watching television, and talking on the phone with friends. In addition, language patterns demonstrated a generational shift towards monolingualism in Spanish. Students reported most frequent use of Guaraní with grandparents, with Guaraní spoken with parents significantly less often. The difference is significant at one percent level. Communication in Guaraní with siblings is even less frequent.

It is possible that the pattern demonstrated in this small sample reflects a national level shift, at least in urban areas, away from Guaraní. Gynan (2007) confirmed that urbanization has continued in Paraguay, with the population passing into predominantly urban for the first time in 2002. "The picture emerging is one of an aging Guaraní-speaking population in rural areas, with notable declines in the numbers of very young speakers of the language" (p. 294). At the same time, the number of bilinguals in rural areas has been increasing (as monolingualism in Guaraní decreases) especially amongst teenagers between fifteen and nineteen years old. This may suggest that the bilingual education modules in rural areas are effective, yet it also points to the likelihood that

monolingualism in Guaraní will continue to decline (Gynan, 2007). Nickson (2013), however, claims that even with high rates of migration from rural areas to urban centers, "there is little evidence of a decline in Guaraní usage…that has taken place since the 1980s" (p. 398). This data clearly contradicts Nickson's conclusion.

Students' language patterns suggest that they are using less Guaraní than did their grandparents' and parents' generations. However, it is evident that Guaraní continues to play a role in establishing group membership. For instance, data shows that Guaraní is used frequently during collective activities such as soccer matches. Even students who reported speaking virtually no Guaraní with family members or in school, often stated that the use Guaraní is common on the soccer field. This is particularly evident amongst male participants. Certain words and phrases in Guaraní, it seems, play a critical role in establishing one's position as a soccer player. Not surprisingly, many of the words and phrases that are uttered in Guaraní are graphic insults directed at the opponent, or more lighthearted teasing directed at teammates. Knowledge of these terms communicates to other players that the individual has spent a significant amount of time on the field, and further establishes his position as a member of the community.

Even amongst students who reported that they very rarely choose to use it themselves, there were reports of the power of Guaraní to communicate closeness in a way that Spanish, English and Portuguese cannot. There was also evidence that points to participants' understanding that the use of Guaraní can establish a certain dynamic in a relationship; one of familiarity or intimacy. This desire to speak and understand at least certain words in Guaraní is evident in participants' references to Guaraní being "*más dulce*" (sweeter) and "*más fuerte*" (stronger) than Spanish. A number of students reported

their use of Guaraní is almost exclusively for the purpose of insulting others. This is, of course, connected to their understanding that Guaraní is more powerful in this particular domain. Power, however, is understood in terms of ability to cause harm due to being more graphic and carrying more emotional weight than do similar phrases in Spanish. Within this domain, although there is a desire to know certain words and phrases in Guaraní in order to communicate closeness or to deliver biting insults, these are language skills that are not taught in the classroom. In other words, this desire does not carry over to motivation to learn Guaraní in school, nor does it reflect positive attitudes towards the language as a whole.

Individual circumstances and exposure to Guaraní outside of the classroom also influence students' language practices at school. Those who reported higher exposure to Guaraní at home participated more frequently during Guaraní class, and unlike their peers, also used Guaraní during other subjects. With that said, more frequent exposure to and use of Guaraní do not always correlate to more positive opinions of the language itself.

Connections between Use and Attitudes

Students who reported having no interest in Guaraní or explicitly commented on their dislike of the language were also more likely to report less frequent use of Guaraní for communication and to engage in activities. Attitudes towards language, and language use, is in many ways a 'chicken and egg' debate. Do attitudes towards language influence language use, or do proficiency and use determine attitudes? I understand this connection to be non-linear. However, patterns of language use often reflect underlying attitudes

that are largely the result of societal level discourses regarding the value of a language. Such discourses are linked to sociohistorical trajectories that establish some languages as more powerful than others. Without claiming to understand the complexities of this relationship, it is clear that language use and language ideologies are closely related. In the following section, I will explore students' and teachers' attitudes towards the various languages to which they are exposed.

## Language Ideologies amongst Teachers and Students

One of the central goals of this study was to gain an understanding of teachers' and students' language ideologies and to recognize their associations with and attitudes towards the different languages in their environment. Such attitudes are critical to understanding students' and teachers motivation (or lack thereof) for learning Guaraní in the classroom. Students' and teachers' language ideologies were found to revolve around the following themes:

1) National identity and pride
2) Potential for the language to provide job opportunities
3) Potential to provide access to global networks and technology
4) Prestige associated with the language
5) Perceptions of the level of difficulty of learning to write, speak, and read the language.

<u>Teachers' Attitudes</u>

Guaraní was frequently used or referenced when discussing issues of national identity and national pride. Teachers' patterns of Guaraní use as well as their metalanguage suggest an understanding that Guaraní is fundamentally connected to Paraguayan identity. This was demonstrated by teachers' references to Guaraní (either in conversations with me or interactions with the students) as *"nuestro*" (ours). The language teachers use to describe Guaraní include, "*nuestro idioma*" (our language), "*nuestro segundo idioma"* (our second language), or "*el idioma de los paraguayos*" (the language of Paraguayans). This choice of words mirrors a societal level, nationalistic discourse regarding Guaraní. Two teachers explicitly stated that they see Guaraní as important for students primarily in terms of developing a sense of pride in being Paraguayan. They further explained that Guaraní can serve students in maintaining their identity as Paraguayans should they travel to other parts of the world.

These positive associations of the power of Guaraní to unite Paraguayans are juxtaposed with views that Guaraní, unlike English and Spanish, will not provide students with opportunities for employment or upward social mobility. Teachers expressed an understanding that students share this perspective on Guaraní, and that this is closely linked to students' lack of motivation to learn Guaraní. The students, one teacher explained, see Guaraní as limited to Paraguay, in contrast with other languages (particularly English) which they perceive to potentially provide access to travel, job opportunities, and more generally, to financial gain.

Similarly, teachers described the connection between English and topics that are particularly attractive to young people in Asunción, such as online social networks and

popular culture. Interestingly, teachers comments on the issue almost always centered around their perceptions of students attitudes, and rarely on their own thoughts on the potential (or lack thereof) for Guaraní to provide access to, or find a space within social media, global networking, and advanced technology. Most teachers seemed hesitant to state that they see Guaraní as unsuited for this arena. However, not one teacher explicitly contested this particular understanding of Guaraní, nor were there explanations of attempts to debunk this belief amongst students.

Teachers' attitudes also reflect societal level discourses that Spanish is a more prestigious language than Guaraní, consistent with previous research on bilingualism in Paraguay (Rubin, 1968; Gynan, 2007; Nickson, 2013). However, some teachers express sadness about this perspective on Guaraní. One teacher lamented that the same students who resist Guaraní, are attracted to Spanish colloquialisms from other Spanish speaking countries. "*Van a Argentina y cuando regresan están diciendo "che""* (They go to Argentina and when they return they are saying "*che*"). She explained that it saddens her to see students imitate the language of other cultures rather than feel pride in their own. Similarly, another teacher stated that, while she sees it as an unfortunate reality, students associate Guaraní with a low social status, while Spanish, English and Portuguese are all held in higher esteem.

Educators also demonstrated different considerations regarding the difficulties associated with learning Guaraní. Most acknowledged that it is very difficult for the students to learn Guaraní, and in some cases, that it had been difficult for them to learn the language themselves. These teachers made a point to highlight, on numerous occasions, that not only is Guaraní not the students' first language, but also that it is

*extremely* challenging for them to learn Guaraní in the context of the classroom. During Guaraní lessons, teachers would often turn to me and say "*¿Viste profe como les cuesta*?"(Do you see, teacher, how difficult it is for them?) References to Guaraní as "*difícil*" (difficult) or as an area of studies that "*les cuesta*" (is challenging for them) or "*cuesta aprender*" (is challenging to learn) were common amongst most teachers' reflections on their students' experiences with Guaraní class and the language in general.

Two teachers, however, suggested that students' complaints about the difficulty of learning Guaraní are due to the language itself, but on lack of practice. One of the fifth grade teachers, Profe Angela, rejects the notion that Guaraní is more difficult than other languages. She explained that while students seem to think that Guaraní is harder to learn than either English or Portuguese, this is merely due to the fact that they are less inclined to practice Guaraní. My own understanding is that opinions about Guaraní as being a particularly difficult language are slightly more complex, but are very much related to broader attitudes about Guaraní. Due to its history as an oral language, the written language was created far later and lacks vocabulary necessary for certain communication, making it difficult to discuss some subjects. A history of language oppression and prestige associated with Spanish has maintained a diglossic status quo such that, while some topics may be commonly discussed in Guaraní or *jopará* (the combination of Spanish and Guaraní) others are generally discussed in Spanish. In other words, comments regarding the lack of practice as the reason for such difficulty, particularly for contexts not commonly addressed in Guaraní, are most likely accurate. Still, while there is undoubtedly some truth to the difficulty in learning Guaraní, my observations and discussions with students and teachers suggest that these perceptions are largely couched

in attitudes towards the language itself and opinions regarding its usefulness (or lack thereof). In other words, perhaps it is not so much that Guaraní is difficult, rather it is not perceived to be useful in terms of gaining financial or social capital, resulting in less motivation to practice.

Students' Attitudes

First, students' motivation for learning Guaraní and attitudes towards the language will be discussed in comparison to those related to Spanish, English, and Portuguese, the other languages of instruction in the school. Despite relatively infrequent use of Guaraní, students' comments demonstrate a strong connection between Guaraní and national identity. Students, like teachers, made references to Guaraní with the word "*nuestro"* (our/ours). Interestingly, not once was Spanish, or any other language referred to with the same pronoun. This is a powerful choice of words and reflects a nationalistic discourse that has been present in Paraguay since the colonial era. Students' responses to questions about Guaraní and comments during informal interviews suggest that they view Guaraní and *jopará* as central to their collective identity as Paraguayans. However, despite discourses regarding the role of Guaraní in maintaining national cohesion, students' associations with Guaraní as Paraguayan do not necessarily indicate that they view Guaraní *classes* as an important component of their education. On the contrary, most students identified limited motivation to learn Guaraní in school.

Baker (2001) described an overarching framework for understanding students' motivation to learn a language:

1) *Integrative motivation,* which is described as the desire to learn a

language in order to identify with a certain group

2) *Instrumental motivation,* or learning a language for useful purposes (p. 123)

Amongst the participants in this study, 'integrative motivation' to learn Guaraní is demonstrated by the strong connection between Guaraní and Paraguayan identity, the role of Guaraní in establishing group membership, and its ability to communicate familiarity and intimacy. While there is a desire amongst many students to use Guaraní for those purposes (as reflected by their patterns of language use) there is a notable *lack* of 'instrumental motivation' (Baker, 2001) to learn Guaraní. While students' comments demonstrate use of Guaraní to establish connections and as a part of perceptions of their collective identities as Paraguayans, there was very little evidence that suggested students feel that Guaraní will serve them in any sort of tangible way. The lack of material incentive, in fact, was students' most frequent complaint about Guaraní classes. Students often made disparaging comments regarding the impracticality of Guaraní as a global language, or as a language that would serve them when they were searching for employment. One student stated this division very explicitly. "*La educación bilingüe y aprender y entender guaraní es importante para recuperar nuestro idioma, acerca de aprender inglés y otros idiomas también es importante para tener más oportunidades*." (Bilingual education and to learn and understand Guaraní is important to recover our language, in regards to English and other languages, it's also important in order to have more opportunities).

Similar attitudes were expressed by many students. Guaraní (unlike English or Portuguese) was not perceived as a language that would provide job opportunities or

upward economic mobility. This is rather ironic, given that there is still a significant portion of the Paraguayan population that is monolingual in Guaraní. One would assume that given the number of monolingual speakers, learning Guaraní *would* provide advantages in terms of employment in a variety of fields. This points to broader, societal level discourses surrounding the value of Guaraní, as well as the lack of infrastructure in higher education (such as training for lawyers, nurses, doctors, and politicians) that would require professionals to acquire at least basic knowledge of Guaraní.

When discussing their desire to learn English or Portuguese, students' comments were almost entirely focused on the opportunities for upward social mobility that knowledge of those languages would potentially provide. Some students reported strong desire to "get out" of Paraguay, and explained that learning English could create the opportunity to move to the United States or Europe. Similarly, Portuguese was described by students as a tool that might help them to find employment in Brazil. Those who were not seeking to leave the country still reported the potential for English to increase their chances of finding a job and of earning higher wages within Paraguay.

In addition to the potential financial gains associated with learning "*un idioma internacional*" or "*una lengua global*" (an international language, or a global language) such as English or Portuguese, students also referred to the potential of those languages to provide social capital through access to global networks and technology. For older students, this was particularly true in relation to social media networks such as Facebook and Instagram. Younger students described motivation to learn English in order to engage in online video games, or to understand the lyrics of their favorite pop songs from the United States. As far as providing access to technology and social networks, English

reigns supreme for the students. One teacher explained to me that she feels the students are much more excited by the potential to learn English because they have more access to English. My facial expression must have communicated my confusion because she laughed and explained that while the students hear Guaraní on a daily basis, they see and hear English on the internet, on their cell phones, and on television. I understood that what she meant was not that students are actually *exposed* to more English than Guaraní, rather that the English they are exposed to is connected to a domain that is extremely attractive. While Spanish or Portuguese are understood to be languages of power, English, for many students, possesses another level of appeal related to technology and social media.

These attitudes, of course, are connected to perceptions regarding varying levels of prestige associated with languages and their speakers. Virtually unanimously, students described perceptions of Guaraní as less prestigious than all three European languages. These perspectives reflect the colonial legacy left by hundreds of years of oppression of indigenous peoples and their languages. Despite the fact that Guaraní was used and continues to be used as a tool to reinforce Paraguayan nationalism, it still carries a stigma that dates back to racism and Eurocentrism that dictated the relationship between indigenous populations and Spanish colonizers. Both students and teachers commented on the tendency to associate Guaraní with "*el campo*" (the country), "*los indios*" (the indians) and "*la ignorancia*" (ignorance). At the opposite end of the spectrum, English is associated with the United States and Europe, (and metropolitan areas in general) as well as "*la tecnología*" (technology), and "*el futuro*" (the future).

Students, like teachers, made many comments about how challenging it is to learn Guaraní in the context of the classroom. Comments included complaints about how the meaning of words in Guaraní "*depende demasiado del contexto*" (depends too much on the context), or how, while they are accustomed to certain words or phrases in Guaraní, speaking about topics for which they would use Spanish is extremely difficult. While there are a combination of factors that make it challenging, there is no doubt that the tasks students are expected to complete during Guaraní class are indeed difficult for them. In one classroom I observed as students worked in pairs and attempted to create a dialogue in Guaraní between a mother and child, modeled after a similar dialogue that had been read aloud to the class. During the activity, students' shouted out questions such as: "*¿Cómo se dice ¿qué tal te fue? en guaraní*?" (How do you say 'how did it go?' in Guaraní?) "*¿Cómo se llama tu mamá…en guaraní?"* (What is your mom's name…in Guaraní) "*Como se dice '¿Qué tal fue tu día*?' (How do you say 'how did your day go?') *"¿'Chau' cómo se dice en guaraní?"* (How do you say '*chau*' in Guaraní?). Their questions confirmed that the activity, though seemingly simple, was rather challenging. I sat next to a pair of girls as they worked and one of them asked the other how to say something in Guaraní, to which her classmate responded "*No sé, no sé mucho guaraní yo*" (I don't know. I don't know much Guaraní.) The other quickly retorted, "*Yo tampoco."*(Me neither). They shrugged and went about using the dictionary to look up the words they needed in order to complete the dialogue.

In a fourth grade classroom next door, I chatted with a group of five girls during their recess and asked about their opinions of Guaraní, English and Portuguese. Three girls explained that they liked Portuguese the best, and two stated that they preferred

English. I asked them to explain why, to which they responded that the pronunciation and writing are much more difficult in Guaraní than the other languages. In virtually every conversation that I had with students about Guaraní, similar sentiments were expressed regarding the level of difficulty of learning the language in the classroom.

Again, while perceptions of difficulty amongst students are linked (to a certain extent) to the challenges associated with learning to read and write a language that was traditionally oral, they are also fundamentally connected to varying levels of prestige associated with the language. Thus, Guaraní (for most students) is perceived to be less prestigious, which impacts students' desire to practice, and their motivation to learn the language.

While certain knowledge and use of Guaraní is seen as acceptable as a part of displaying patriotism, group membership in certain contexts, or closeness with neighbors or grandparents; students associate extended use of Guaraní with rural areas, low social status, and even limited intelligence. In contrast, the prestige associated with English and Portuguese make those languages more attractive, increasing students' desire to practice and learn these languages within the context of the classroom.

CHAPTER 6

# **Conclusion**

## Summary of Findings

Despite widespread bilingualism in Paraguay, results indicate unequal distribution of power across languages. Thus, patterns of language use among teachers and students in Asunción are consistent with those associated with contexts of diglossia, in which the (H) language (Spanish) is viewed as more prestigious and utilized within the public sphere, while the (L) language (Guaraní) is less prestigious, and relegated to the private sphere. In contrast to recent findings that vitality of Guaraní will remain high even in urban areas (Nickson, 2013), results suggest that students in Asunción overwhelmingly prefer to engage in Spanish. Student participants use significantly less Guaraní than did previous generations, and seldom choose to use Guaraní during activities of their choice.

Both the attitudes towards and the use of Guaraní indicate that students and teachers identify the language as closely connected to Paraguayan national identity. Guaraní is also viewed as the language of choice in establishing group membership within certain contexts, and for communicating closeness. These patterns are demonstrated by teachers' and students' references to Guaraní as "*nuestro"* (ours), the use of Guaraní in situations that require acceptance (such as on the soccer field), and reflections about the emotional weight of Guaraní; its power to express both the most intimate and offensive sentiments.

Language ideologies communicated by both teachers and students' create an image of Guaraní as "useful" in terms of these qualities, yet they do not view Guaraní as

a language that will serve the speaker in *tangible* ways, such as increasing opportunities for employment abroad, or higher wages within Paraguay. Such attitudes contrast those towards Portuguese and English, which students and teachers believe to possess the potential to provide upward social mobility, prestige, and access to global networks. Perceptions regarding the outcomes associated with learning Guaraní, in comparison to English and Portuguese, have a great deal of influence on students' motivation to develop language skills within the context of the classroom.

## Guaraní and Social Identity

Marcos, a friend of mine from Asunción, moved to New York eight years ago. His brother had already been living there for a few years, and they both found work with a construction company in Queens that is run by another Paraguayan. I asked him about a year after having moved, how he was doing, if he missed Paraguay, and whether he had established some semblance of a community. He smiled and explained that of course he missed certain things (his family more than anything else) but that he had formed a strong community of Paraguayans living in Queens. He could buy *sopa paraguaya*, and *chipa guazú* from the restaurant around the corner from his apartment whenever he pleased, and his friends all drank *tereré* during the hot summer months. He went on to explain that he had even learned to speak Guaraní far better than he ever had while in Paraguay. While working construction, he and his Paraguayan coworkers all spoke with one another in Guaraní rather than Spanish or English. The irony was not lost on him that although he had never put any effort into learning the language during his teenage years (and had

even avoided it) a decade later he was living in one of the biggest, most metropolitan cities in the world, speaking an indigenous language from his country of origin.

Marcos' story illustrates the powerful link between Guaraní and national identity amongst Paraguayans. It also speaks to the ability of a language to establish closeness with friends and coworkers, particularly when lacking many of the comforts associated with home. In addition, it highlights the issue of motivation to learn a language. While in Paraguay, Marcos neither felt significant 'integrative motivation', nor did he feel 'instrumental motivation' (Baker, 2001) to learn Guaraní. Ironically, once he arrived in New York, he felt both the need to establish closeness with others, and to solidify his identity as a Paraguayan. Guaraní provided an opportunity to do so. At the same time, there were concrete benefits associated with learning to speak and understand Guaraní in order to communicate effectively with his boss and coworkers.

Many of the students' attitudes in this study, resemble those of Marcos prior to moving to New York. While there is an understanding amongst the participants that Guaraní is tied to Paraguayan identity, within urban contexts, this is often limited to knowledge of a select few words and phrases that virtually all Paraguayans are familiar with. In other words, it does not equate to any motivation to study sentence structure or complex vocabulary in Guaraní. Similarly, the Guaraní that is associated with establishing group membership does not correlate to the Guaraní that is taught in the classroom. Thus, students do not identify "useful" purposes for developing literacy skills in Guaraní. In short, while students demonstrate some level of 'integrative motivation' (Baker, 2001) to learn Guaraní, they are still not motivated to do so in school.

The status of Guaraní within the education system has taken significant strides since the language was prohibited in schools during the 1960s. However, there is still much work to be done. Findings suggest that in order for students (at least those in urban areas such as Asunción) to be motivated to learn Guaraní in the context of the classroom, they need to identify additional instrumental motivation to so (Baker, 2001) in the form of opportunities. Undeniably, creating employment opportunities would be significant challenge. Careful consideration on the part of policy makers would help to determine what type of resources would be required in order to carry out this kind of initiative, and to identify which sectors could potentially provide jobs or opportunities for upward mobility for employees who speak Guaraní

Given that state level policies are slow to develop let alone be implemented, for the time being, smaller efforts on the part of individual educators may be a more logical approach. Teachers are in a position of power that allows them to actively challenge societal level discourses regarding the role of Guaraní in Paraguayan society. Rather than focusing entirely on the language's ability to solidify national identity, educators can create alternative dialogues surrounding the future of Guaraní and its speakers. By attempting to shift their own patterns of language and utilizing multiple language systems, educators can encourage students to draw on these resources as well. Teachers can also explicitly contest notions regarding the status and prestige associated with each language by asking questions, and scaffolding students as they critically analyze the connections between language and unequal distribution of power in Paraguay. Why is Guaraní acceptable for discussing certain subjects, in certain spaces, while Spanish is to be used in others? Why is English appealing for students to learn, while Guaraní is not?

Why are monolingual speakers of Guaraní disproportionately poor in comparison to speakers of Spanish? What sort of changes can students identify that would need to take place in order for Guaraní to seem "useful" for them? Although there are no simple answers to these questions, by embracing a transformative pedagogical approach (Cummins, 2000) educators can facilitate discussions that will allow their students to challenge the status quo and to utilize Guaraní as a tool for empowerment. In doing so, they will help children to pave a route towards a more equitable and democratic future for Paraguay.

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