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An Initial Assessment of Inga Language and Culture Revitalization in Putumayo, Colombia

Valerie Cross
*Indiana University*

Serafín M. Coronel-Molina
*Indiana University*

**Abstract**

Increasing levels of Quechua–Spanish bilingualism and increased use of Spanish within Indigenous communities and classrooms have given rise to concern about Quechua language maintenance (Hornberger, 1988, 1998, 1999; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004). The present investigation is preliminary and explores the possibility of bilingual intercultural education to promote Quechua (Inga) language revitalization in the Putumayo region of Colombia. Because of the large role that schooling has played in the language shift process, Inga language revitalization efforts have focused on implementing use of the Inga language in schools. This paper offers suggestions based on research in second language acquisition (SLA), language revitalization, and bilingual intercultural education to improve recent efforts and overcome the many explicit and implicit challenges that exist to bilingual education implementation in Putumayo, Colombia. This article attempts to bring such forms of resistance to the surface and provide suggestions for overcoming them, in hopes of facilitating the grassroots-initiated language planning goals of culture revitalization and reversing language shift that are already in place.

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2 Bio: Valerie Cross is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Literacy, Culture, and Language Education at Indiana University. She has a B.A. in Spanish and Psychology from Furman University, and an M.A. in TESOL from Indiana University. Valerie has taught ESL at Indiana University and in Mexico and California. Her research interests include sociolinguistics and second language acquisition. Email: valcross528@gmail.com

3 Bio: Associate Professor of Language Education in the Department of Literacy, Culture and Language Education at Indiana University’s School of Education. His research interests include revitalization of Indigenous languages (Quechua and Aymara), the politics of language, language attitudes and ideologies, minority languages and technology, language maintenance and shift, language contact phenomena, multilingualism and bilingual education, Indigenous literacies in the Americas, and issues of language, culture, and identity in the Andes and beyond. Email: scoronel@indiana.edu


Resumen

El incremento de los niveles de bilingüismo quechua-español y el mayor uso del español en las comunidades y en las aulas Indígenas han sido objeto de preocupación en cuanto al mantenimiento de la lengua quechua (Hornberger, 1988, 1998, 1999; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004). La presente investigación es preliminar y explora la posibilidad de la educación intercultural bilingüe para promover la revitalización de la lengua quechua (ingano) en la región de Putumayo, Colombia. Debido al gran papel que la educación ha desempeñado en el proceso de desplazamiento idiomático, los esfuerzos de revitalización del ingano se han centrado en la implementación esta lengua en las escuelas. El presente artículo ofrece sugerencias basadas en la investigación de adquisición de segundas lenguas (SLA), la revitalización idiomática y la educación intercultural bilingüe con la finalidad de mejorar los esfuerzos recientes y poder superar los numerosos desafíos explícitos e implícitos que existen en la implementación de la educación bilingüe en Putumayo, Colombia. Este artículo trata de exteriorizar esas formas de resistencia y proporciona sugerencias para poder superarlos con la esperanza de facilitar los objetivos de la planificación lingüística provenientes de las bases de la revitalización cultural y el proceso de reversión idiomática que ya se encuentran en marcha.

1. Introduction

In the present context of cultural, economic, and political globalization, world languages with international status continue to gain perceived value, while local languages correspondingly lose value or “currency” in the global language market (McCarty, 2003). Increasing levels of Quechua–Spanish bilingualism and increased use of Spanish within Indigenous communities and classrooms have given rise to concern about Quechua language maintenance (Hornberger, 1988, 1998, 1999; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004). The present investigation is preliminary, as the authors have not yet conducted field work in the Putumayo region of Colombia. The authors draw on other Andean and bilingual research to explore the possibility of bilingual intercultural education to promote Quechua language revitalization in the Putumayo region of Colombia. More specifically, the paper is an attempt to portray the present linguistic and educational situation of Colombian Ingas, as well as to outline forms of resistance and possibility of bilingual Inga-Spanish education in Putumayo.

Following a brief overview of Quechua language shift, this paper focuses on the Inga context in Colombia. The historical role of schools in Inga communities, including their influence on language shift from Inga to Spanish, will then be addressed. Because of the large role that schooling has played in the language shift process, Inga language revitalization efforts have focused on implementing the use of the Inga language as a medium (versus as a school subject) in schools. The present paper focuses on the resulting bilingual education efforts in Putumayo,
Colombia, highlighting some potential impediments in the present program and curricular design as well as various other forms of resistance to the efforts. Suggestions are made to improve the present bilingual education situation based on second language acquisition (SLA), language revitalization, and bilingual intercultural education research. While we acknowledge that there exist many explicit and implicit challenges to bilingual education implementation in Putumayo, this paper attempts to bring such forms of resistance to the surface and provide suggestions for overcoming them in hopes of facilitating the grassroots-initiated language planning goal of reversing language shift.

2. Quechua Language Shift

In the midst of comparable histories that include resisting years of European colonization attempts, similar experiences and challenges have emerged across diverse Quechua-speaking communities. One such challenge has been the function of Spanish as a significant tool of colonization and its status as the national language of many of the countries where Indigenous communities reside (Coronel-Molina, 1999, 2007; Hornberger, 1987). Language has served as an important means of preservation of Quechua culture and civilization as well as resistance against colonizing forces (Carlosama Gaviria, 2001). In the context of increased contact with the Spanish language in the last five centuries, trends of language shift toward use of Spanish and bilingualism have become increasingly prevalent (for a comprehensive definition and literature review of language shift, see Coronel-Molina, 2014).

Within many Quechua communities, Spanish is commonly learned at a young age, resulting in high levels of ‘bilingualism,’ understood here as native-like productive and receptive command of two languages. Generational differences in the occurrence of bilingualism among Indigenous persons are vast and increasing in the context of recent escalation of contact with nonindigenous national populations, due to immigration as well as other factors (Coronel-Molina, 1999; Harvey, 1994; Hornberger, 2000). Quechua language maintenance has become an issue of concern in light of the recently increasing rates of language shift away from Quechua (Hornberger, 1988, 1998, 1999; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004).

2.1. Colombian Inga Context

2.1.1. Present Linguistic Reality

According to Colombia’s 2005 census (DANE, 2005), of Colombia’s 41,468,384 total population, about 3.4% or 1,392,623 are considered ethnically Indigenous and represent a vast diversity of Indigenous groups. According to DANE (2007), 64 American Indian languages are spoken in Colombia, representing 13 language families. Inga is one such
language, and is spoken by Ingano populations found mostly in rural areas in and around the Putumayo department of southwest Colombia as well as in urban areas such as Bogotá. The Quechua varieties spoken in Colombia are also known as Ingano or Napeño and their range is limited to distinct villages and communities within the departments and comisarías of Caquetá, Cauca, Huila, Nariño and Putumayo.

These include Aponte in Nariño, Santa Rosa de Caquetá in Cauca, Descanse and Alto Caquetá in Caquetá, and the towns of Santiago, San Andrés, Colón, Mocoa Limón, Guarango and Puerto Asis in Putumayo. Cerrón Palomino opines that Quechua is most actively spoken in the comisaría of Putumayo, while it is dying out in Cauca and Caquetá, although he urges caution in relying on these data, given their extreme antiquity (Cerrón-Palomino, 1987: 57; Landaburu, 2000: (35)). According to Ethnologue Colombia (1996), Highland Inga (Quechua) is spoken in the Sibundoy Valley, San Andrés and Colón (department of Putumayo) and in Aponte (department of Nariño). There are also a small number of Ingano (Quechua) speakers in Bogotá, the capital, as well as in Venezuela. (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 21)

The ethnic population of Ingas is approximately 17,860, and the Inga language is one of many dialects of Quechua (Ethnologue, 2005). Inga, also known as Highland Inga, is spoken by approximately 16,000 people, 12,000 of whom reside in Colombia, mostly in and around the department of Putumayo in Colombia (Ethnologue, 2005).

Lowland Inga is spoken in the jungle regions and has fewer speakers than Highland Inga. It is found along the Upper Caquetá and Putumayo Rivers. Napeño, which Ethnologue also denotes as lowland Quechua, is spoken along the Putumayo River, and has an unknown number of speakers in Colombia. Napeño also has some speakers in Ecuador and Peru, although Ethnologue is the only source that indicates this. (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004, pp. 21-22)

Ingas and other Indigenous groups represent 21% of the total population in the department of Putumayo (DANE, 2005). Despite the laws that have been passed to protect the rights of Indigenous languages, Spanish continues to be the official language in the state institutions of Colombia (Education Project, 2003).

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spoken by approximately 16,000 people, 12,000 of whom reside in Colombia, mostly in and around the department of Putumayo in Colombia (Ethnologue, 2005). Ingas and other Indigenous groups represent 21% of the total population in the department of Putumayo (DANE, 2005). Despite the laws that have been passed to protect the rights of Indigenous languages, Spanish continues to be the official language in the state institutions of Colombia (Education Project, 2003). For some historical references on the Putumayo valley, see McDowell 1989, Dover, 1995. For a detailed list of linguistic and cultural sources on Inga, refer to Bibliografía, 1997.

2.2. Inga Language Shift in the Putumayo Region

Soler Castillo (2003) investigated degrees of bilingualism and Indigenous (Inga) attitudes toward Spanish and the Inga dialect of Quechua in the rural Inga town of Santiago in the department of Putumayo, Colombia and in the urban area of Santafé in the department of Bogotá, Colombia. The comparison of these two locations resulted from hypotheses that the Ingas in Bogotá, most of whom migrated from Santiago, are losing their language and culture at an accelerated rate compared to their rural counterparts due to the increased contact with the city culture. In her research, Soler Castillo found similar generational trends in command of the Inga language in both locations. The adults (older than 26) are fully bilingual Inga–Spanish, and the youth (15–25 years) and children (9–14 years) are not considered fully bilingual because though they have good comprehension of Inga, they speak it infrequently. Adults have proficiency in both languages but prefer to speak Inga in the majority of contexts, and younger members prefer to use Spanish in almost all contexts. Despite the stark generational division in bilingualism and language use found among Inga Quechua speakers of these communities, Soler Castillo describes the general linguistic attitudes toward both Inga and Spanish as very positive across ages.

The recent shift toward use of Spanish over Inga in various contexts reflects political and cultural pressures and may be cause for concern in terms of Inga language preservation. Social dynamics and language choice are complicated even further for the many Ingas that migrate to urban areas in search of work (Soler Castillo, 2003). Due to greater contact with Spanish speakers, Inga families living in urban areas communicate mostly in Spanish or a form of Inga laced with Spanish loan words and syntax, whereas those in rural areas have a tendency to communicate in Inga (Education Project, 2003). Within families with higher education levels, as well as in families with one nonindigenous parent, Spanish tends to be the primary language spoken. Inga children raised in a household in which they have extensive contact with the
grandparents or elders of the family have the highest probability of growing up bilingual (Education Project, 2003).

2.2.1. Role of Schooling in Inga Language Shift

The shift in language use from Quechua to Spanish is especially evident upon examination of the use of the two languages within Indigenous classrooms. Schooling in colonial contexts is one specific domain where the dominant language is often instantiated at the expense of the Indigenous languages present in the society (Coronel-Molina, 1999, 2007). Schools run by members of the colonizing society have historically served as a tool of colonization and have played an important role in promoting language shift toward the language of colonization (Carlosama Gaviria, 2001; Hornberger, 1987). Carlosama Gaviria (2001) describes the instantiation of schooling by members of the dominant, colonizing population as a tool of submission and integration of Indigenous groups into the majority society. He claims that this colonizing attempt is realized through methods and strategies aimed at ridding Indigenous pupils of their cultural identities in favor of adoption of the national majority culture, which is thought or claimed to be more civilized.

In light of the sociohistorical context of many Indigenous populations, one can understand more completely the role that schools have historically had, and the embedded ideologies and expectations of the role of schools within communities. As most schools in these particular Quechua communities were founded for the sole purpose of teaching community members Spanish and were to be maintained as separate entities from the rest of the community, it is not surprising that all teaching has historically been conducted in Spanish and the school is ideologically and physically positioned on the periphery of the community. As has been observed in other Andean and non-Andean language revitalization contexts, such positioning can negatively affect student learning and deter Indigenous community member involvement in education and curriculum planning affecting Indigenous children (García, 2005; Harvey, 1994).

Schools in Inga communities in the Sibundoy Valley of Colombia are no different from those highlighted above, having long been associated with colonization. Educational institutions have contributed to the hegemony of the Spanish language within the Indigenous communities of Colombia. In the case of the Inga communities in the Putumayo region, the mission of assimilation has been enacted through boarding schools in which teaching is exclusively in Spanish, children are separated from their families and culture, and use of traditional Inga dress and the Inga language have been prohibited and replaced by mainstream Spanish language and culture (Education Project, 2003). As outlined by Fishman (1991), attempts to distance Indigenous students from their culture can
be a powerful tool in reducing symbolic power and agency, especially coupled with banning use of the native language (Bourdieu 1991). Schooling historically based on colonization and taught by nonindigenous outsiders had and continues to have many important implications for language medium and classroom curricula. As Carlosama Gaviria (2001) asserts, teaching in Colombia has been based on one model with the objective of “civilizing” and instructing the “Indian” about how to integrate into the national society.

Within the context of varying levels of bilingualism, both Indigenous and nonindigenous teachers in Inga schools have conventionally used Spanish as the mode of instruction. The Inga students from rural communities who do not know Spanish are at an early disadvantage in the Spanish-dominated educational system. As Hornberger (2006) points out based on research with Quechua communities in Puno, Peru, attribution of a naturally shy and reserved personality to Quechua children discounts and veils the possibility that these children may be quiet in the classroom due to the language barrier that many experience. In the Sibundoy Valley, the early disadvantage is evident in the frequent obligation of Inga-speaking students to repeat primary grades, especially the first year of school (Education Project, 2003). While some of these students do learn Spanish as a second language eventually (at least oral communication skills), the early schooling experiences in a language they do not understand coupled with the demand that they repeat grades are likely to contribute to negative school attitudes and a high drop-out rate. The frequent occurrence of early drop-out among Inga schoolchildren as reported in the town of Santiago may be reflected in the drastically higher population of students in the first grade (more than 100) and relatively few students enrolled in the sixth grade or beyond (less than 20) (Education Project, 2003).

3. Language Revitalization

Language policy and planning (LPP) efforts have been explored and theorized by many scholars in a variety of contexts (Canagarajah, 2005; Cooper, 1989; Fishman, 1991; Hinton & Hale, 2001; Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; McCarty, 2011, 2013; Ricento, 2006; Schiffman, 1996; Spolsky, 2004, 2012, among others). Concern about language shift and death, and the possibility of reversing language shift and of revitalization of endangered languages have become a major focus in LPP research (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Grenoble and Whaley, 2006; Hinton and Hale, 2001). Following Coronel-Molina’s (1999, 2007, 2014) framework of language shift in particular social domains, language revitalization is defined by King (2001) as “the attempt to add new linguistic forms or social functions to an embattled minority language with the aim of increasing its uses or users” (p. 23). This notion of
language revitalization of languages that have been threatened or partially lost implies a situated context of multiple languages assigned unequal degrees of power or status. For these reasons, Indigenous language planning must also incorporate planning for the other, often “dominant” language(s) present in the context (Hornberger, 2006; Karam, 1974). In contrast to the notion of language maintenance, which focuses more on maintaining and strengthening immigrant and Indigenous languages, language revitalization requires deliberate efforts by the speakers of the language and tends to originate within the speech communities (Fishman, 1991; Hornberger, 2006). Hornberger and King (1996) also emphasize the necessity of involvement of present and future speakers of a language in the process of Indigenous language revitalization, an involvement that must also be present in the implementation of multilingual education in Indigenous contexts (see also Hornberger, 2006).

3.1.1. Inga Language Revitalization

Inga language revitalization efforts have emerged largely from the grassroots level, and the community-level concerns about reversing language shift and revitalizing the Inga language have been inextricably linked to cultural revitalization concerns. Also, language revitalization efforts in the Putumayo have centered around the incorporation of Inga in the community schools. For that reason, it is logical to examine the history of the efforts to change the schooling context along with the accompanying national policies that have supported these efforts. Cultural revitalization efforts will also be briefly addressed, followed by a section including a more critical examination of the bilingual education efforts in the Putumayo.

In the 1970s and 1980s, grassroots movements involved people within the Inga community voicing a need to establish their own educational system, one that is culturally relevant for Indigenous students and which incorporates the Inga language in the curriculum. Musu Runakuna ("New People") is among the Indigenous organizations that have called for research and support for improving education within their communities, and specifically for the incorporation of Inga in community schools (Robert Dover, 1995; Tandiyo Jansasoy, personal communication, November 3, 2008). This is often referred to as “etnoeducación” (ethno-education) in Colombia, and as Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (‘Intercultural Bilingual Education’) in other Spanish-speaking countries (Carlosama Gaviria, 2001). Addressing the lack of native Inga teachers and consequently the need for preparation of Indigenous teachers followed.

Following the grassroots demands for educational policy change, the national government of Colombia passed numerous laws supporting

4. Inga Culture Revitalization

Underlying the possibility of language revitalization must be a unified community consciousness of the endangered status of the language, and efforts to revitalize must be initiated at the grassroots level (Coronel-Molina 1999, 2005, 2007, 2011a, 2012; Hornberger & King 1996, 1998, 2001). Grassroots support seems to be dependent upon a valuing of not only the Indigenous language but also of the group’s cultural practices. Fishman (1991) describes cultural dislocation as a disruption of traditional cultural practices often resulting in a decrease in collective control in communities. As previously mentioned, Fishman (1991) asserts that along with social and physical/demographic dislocations, cultural dislocations can contribute to a complicated language shift process resulting in the reduction of power and agency (Bourdieu, 1991). Because of the intricate link between Indigenous language and cultural identity (Coronel-Molina & Quintero, 2010; Hornberger, 1988; Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004; Howard, 2007; King, 2000), inherent in language revitalization (and multilingual education) efforts must be the promotion of valuing Indigenous cultural practices and identity.

As mentioned above, Inga language revitalization concern and efforts are linked to cultural revitalization, with their success possibly interdependent. In this way, a precursor for success of bilingual programs which promote the teaching of Inga language and culture is promotion of Inga cultural revitalization. While national laws that promote and celebrate the ethnic diversity of Colombia abound, Indigenous groups still experience much discrimination. Soler Castillo (2003) discusses the discrimination that Ingas experience in schools and communities in urban areas like Bogotá. On the grassroots level in both urban and rural communities, appreciation of the Inga culture must be shared in the face of globalization and the presence of national culture, before unified community support of bilingual education can flourish. This Inga cultural renaissance or revitalization has been promoted by various Indigenous leaders and groups. The Musu Runakuna group has been instrumental in promoting the rights of Ingas and in renewing Inga cultural traditions within communities in the Putumayo since the 1980s.
(Dover, 1995; Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, November 3, 2008). In addition to petitioning the government and working for political rights, the Musu Runakuna has consulted elders of the community about cultural traditions which they have worked to restore. Along with cultural revitalization efforts, pockets of grassroots language planning efforts have emerged to promote Inga language education.

5. Bilingual Intercultural Education

As schooling is one important domain which has been instrumental in promoting language shift away from Indigenous language use in societies, the possible role of schools in promoting Indigenous language revitalization must be considered (Hornberger, 2008; Hornberger & King, 1996). With the prevalence of Spanish in the broader community and perception of a higher market value of the language, it is not surprising that the belief in the importance of Inga children learning Spanish is widespread. It has been observed that most Ingas who do learn predominantly through Spanish in school use Spanish more than Inga, and are usually lacking in both Inga and Spanish academic literacy and skills. The need for Inga to be used in schools serving Inga children has been established also, and a push for Inga–Spanish bilingual education in the Putumayo has surfaced. It should also be noted that in addition to recent bilingual education activity in the Sibundoy Valley of Colombia, there has been significant recent activity in Inga instruction in other settings like the adjoining state of Caqueta, particularly in the area around Yunguillo.

Thus far, one Inga–Spanish bilingual school has been established in the Putumayo region, in the town of Santiago. The school is situated in a town where there have historically been two schools, one for girls run by nuns and another for boys run by the Maristas (male Catholic headmasters), both of which are still in place and serve many nonindigenous as well as Indigenous students. The bilingual school was implemented within the last five years and is called “Institucion Educativa Iachai Wasi Carlos Tamoabioy,” translated as “The Carlos Tamoabioy House of Knowledge (School).” As of 2008, the school was serving about 70 students, male and female, in grades one through five, with the goal of extending the school to provide education through grade nine in the near future. The curriculum follows a typical transition model including a gradual progression from total Inga instruction in grade one to nearly total Spanish instruction in grade five. Spanish is first introduced in grade two, and instruction is to be 50 percent in both Inga and Spanish in grade three, followed by a decrease in use of Inga in grades four and five (Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, November 5, 2008).
Still, bilingual education efforts in the Putumayo seem to fall short of producing students with high levels of bilingualism or academic skills in either or both languages, perhaps due to insufficient support of Inga literacy, among other factors. Arguments based on second language acquisition principles claim that the development of both languages, including academic proficiency in them, would be better supported with a bilingual education program that provides adequate Inga L1 support in the classroom throughout schooling. While Spanish may continue to be used more in some domains, the subsequent increases in Inga interpersonal and academic language skills that students would obtain through schooling would likely contribute to the maintenance of the language.

In the next section, program design considerations are presented. Challenges and some possible solutions to Inga–Spanish bilingual education components including program design, materials development, and teacher training will be addressed. Second language acquisition research supporting the need for L1 academic support throughout bilingual schooling efforts will be presented, followed by intercultural bilingual education program types. Suggested program improvements are aimed at increasing the possibility of bilingual education to reverse language shift (Fishman, 1991) and contribute to Inga language revitalization.

6. Program Design Considerations

6.1. Supporting L1 Academic Literacy in Bilingual Education

The assumption that academic literacy, known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), is distinct from general communicative language development or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) is important for understanding language development via schooling (Cummins, 1981). Unlike the language used in informal interpersonal communication, formal language in oral and written academic classroom tasks is thought to require the generation of more complex syntax, more cognitively demanding manipulation of language, and less contextual support (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1982; 1996; Wright & Kuehn, 1998). According to this distinction, a student can develop interpersonal communicative skills in a second language but not develop the academic skills in that language necessary for high academic achievement. Researchers also seem to agree that the ability to understand and use academic language in the classroom positively correlates with student academic achievement in both the L1 (first language) and L2 (second language) (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Collier, 1989). In the Inga example, just because a student learns Spanish communicative skills through schooling does not necessarily mean that the student will develop academic skills in Spanish.
Much research attests the importance of developing academic language proficiency in the L1 before learning it in the L2, and also demonstrates that academic skills or language learned through the L1 easily transfers to the L2 (Eisterhold Carson et al., 1990; Holm & Dodd, 1996; Jiang & Kuehn, 2001). If this research is substantiated, it would imply that Inga students would benefit more from beginning their schooling in their native Inga language and continuing to develop academic skills through Inga even when Spanish is added later. Previous experiences with literacy and schooling in the L1 logically affect students’ potential in the development of L2 academic literacy. From early literacy experiences (presumably in the L1), children develop attitudes toward literacy, beliefs about what literacy entails, and strategies for learning literacy skills (Carson, 1992; Carson et al., 1990). These early experiences can transfer to literacy development in the L2 (Holm & Dodd, 1996), or at least equip students with tools and resources to draw on in the development of literacy in a new language. Cummins (1989) found correlations between L1 and L2 academic proficiency to range from .60 to .80 and demonstrated that students’ ability to read in the first language predicted their L2 reading ability. Although this only demonstrates a correlation, the implications are supported in further research.

In a study of a bilingual program for Navajo speakers in the US, students learned to read first in Navajo in kindergarten through grade 2, were then introduced to reading in English, and continued thereafter to have instruction in both Navajo and English (Rosier & Farella, 1976). When compared with Navajo students who had only received academic literacy instruction in English, the students who learned to read first in Navajo out-performed the others in academic achievement in the English L2 more in each successive grade level and approximated national norms in English academic achievement by sixth grade. The cognitive development and content knowledge students have developed and continue developing in the L1 benefit these students when they are learning academic literacy in the L2. In addition to previous L1 academic literacy experience, the amount of continued L1 academic literacy development while learning the L2 also directly affects ultimate L2 academic literacy attainment (Jiang & Kuehn, 2001; Lewelling, 1991; Swain, 1981).

The benefit of continued cognitive development that usually occurs with L1 support in the L2 classroom accounts for much of the L1 to L2 academic literacy transfer that has been observed (Bialystok, 1991; Collier, 1987, 1989, 1992; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1995). Saville-Troike (1998) describes transfer as “a preexisting knowledge base for making inferences and predictions” (p. 5). According to this definition, it is logical that previous and continued cognitive development in the L1 in second language learning contexts impacts the potential for highly proficient L2 development. The importance of the opportunity for students in second language learning
contexts to continue cognitive development through the L1 while learning the L2 has been highlighted in previous research. Among this research are studies supporting the idea that students may experience cognitive deficiencies in the L2 if their L1 language and literacy does not reach a certain threshold (Collier, 1987; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997). This claim is supported by researchers who attest that cognitive and academic development in the L1 can transfer to second language development (Collier, 1989, 1992; Genesee, 1994; Thomas & Collier, 1997). If opportunities for continued cognitive development through the L1 are few or nonexistent in L2 academic learning, the cognitive and academic development that transfers to the L2 will be significantly diminished.

Many also assert that L1 content and conceptual knowledge can translate easily to the L2 when enough proficiency is attained in the language—another reason for the observed academic literacy transfer effect from L1 to L2. These claims would logically predict that continuing the development of content knowledge in the L1 while L2 proficiency is still limited will aid students in understanding complex concepts in the L2 later. This idea is tied to the cognitive development argument because when students are discouraged from drawing on and continuing development of background subject knowledge in their L1 while their L2 proficiency is developing, as with cognitive strategies in their L1, development in this arena is essentially delayed until the student gains more L2 proficiency (Collier, 1995). Hakuta (1990) presents the example that a child learning about velocity in Spanish should be able to transfer this knowledge to English without having to relearn the concept when provided with the necessary English vocabulary.

L1 literacy effects on L2 development may be delayed in the sense that they are not observable until a certain level of L2 proficiency is attained. Collier (1995) emphasizes that the complex cognitive development, background subject knowledge, and academic literacy skills learners have developed in their L1 will not show immediately in the L2, but rather with time as their L2 proficiency and literacy skills develop. This would be an example of positive L1 transfer. The lack of such skill and literacy development in the L1 would logically be predicted to lead to negative transfer to the L2, which would also be expected to surface later. Indeed, Collier (1995) reports that L2ers with limited L1 academic and cognitive development being schooled in a second language for part or all of the school day often do well in early grades (K through 2 or 3) but have trouble keeping up academically as the cognitive demands increase with successive grades. The disadvantages of lack of L1 development may go largely unnoticed until students reach higher levels of schooling or more academically challenging tasks, at which time the prospect of gaining highly developed L1 literacy will have been
dramatically reduced. A strong case for the theoretical benefits of continued L1 academic literacy development deriving from students receiving some or all of their schooling through their L1 has been made. Suggestions for carrying out this claim in Inga–Spanish bilingual education with regard to program types will now be addressed.

7. Bilingual Education Program Types

Based on Hornberger’s (1991) description of bilingual education models and program types, King (2004) discusses the two main models of bilingual education that have been implemented in South America. Programs designed primarily for Indigenous students are referred to as “transitional models” based on the notion of using instruction in the L1 prior to or along with Spanish to transition students to L2 Spanish development. Arguments in support of these programs which utilize L1 instruction are that they better engage students with the school curriculum and support biliteracy development, which in turn promotes equality in the wider national society. However, such programs have also been criticized for promoting a “subtractive form of bilingualism” due to their heavy orientation towards transitioning the students to the use of Spanish, perhaps at the expense of their Indigenous L1. Often in this educational environment in which Quechua is the L1 and Spanish is the L2, teachers emphasize Spanish acquisition, which supports a shift toward the dominant language and national culture.

“Enrichment” models of bilingual education describe the programs typically provided for high status or “elite” nonindigenous Spanish speakers in which usually English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught as the L2, and sometimes even used as the mode of instruction. These programs have been primarily reserved for nonindigenous populations and are said to be additive, in the sense that students learn an L2 viewed as a high status language as a means to enrich the students’ educational and social opportunities. King (2004) claims that the approaches of the transition and enrichment models leave Indigenous students with fewer educational opportunities, and describes a new bilingual education initiative implemented by an Ecuadorian Indigenous group which incorporates aspects of the enrichment model in schools for Indigenous students. The educational changes that have taken place in this Ecuadorian community resulted from localized planning by members within the community where language shift toward Spanish has resulted in most children being monolingual Spanish speakers. The objective of the new educational system is for Indigenous (Quechua) speakers to attain a form of additive bilingualism like that offered in the nonindigenous elite schools via instruction of their heritage Quechua language as a second language. King argues that the new approach to bilingual education, along with language planning at the local level,
provide the highest possibility for endangered language survival in the context of globalization threats.

The present curriculum model in the bilingual school in the Putumayo more closely resembles the transitional model, proceeding gradually from 100% in Inga to 100% in Spanish (Education Project, 2003). Inga is proposed to be used as the predominant language of instruction in grade one, followed by the introduction of Spanish in grade 2, instruction half in Spanish and half in Inga in grade 3, then a gradual decrease in Inga until only Spanish is used in grade 5 instruction. The curriculum here does not support L1 literacy development throughout schooling as the research suggests, which may hinder students’ ultimate academic literacy achievement in both the L1 and the L2, as has been suggested. Also, the promotion of Inga language maintenance by the present model is questionable at best, and more enrichment-type models may be both applicable and beneficial to bilingual education initiatives in the Putumayo.

7.1. Proposed Changes to the Inga-Spanish Bilingual Program

According to the research presented in the previous section, Inga students would benefit from a bilingual program in which they begin their schooling in Inga and continue to develop academic literacy in Inga throughout the schooling process. After two years of schooling in Inga only, students could benefit from adding part of their schooling through Spanish, at which time their prior Inga academic literacy will be able to translate to Spanish. When their Spanish interpersonal communication proficiency has reached a certain threshold after three or four years, students should demonstrate higher academic literacy and achievement in both languages. In this way, students are able to maintain their native Inga language while simultaneously developing academic proficiency in Spanish, a characteristic of an enrichment-type program model.

Another consideration in the Inga context is total years of schooling offered. The proposed program may be more attuned to a system of schooling through grade 9 or higher, another change that has been proposed by the Inga bilingual education activists. In similar contexts, for example in Peru, where children generally do not stay in school past grade 5, Indigenous parents have resisted bilingual education efforts in which Spanish is not introduced until grade 2 or 3 because of the low ultimate achievement students reach in Spanish. For this reason, until Inga–Spanish bilingual schooling is extended through grade 9 it may be beneficial to offer some Spanish as a second language instruction beginning in grade 1. Development of Inga and Inga–Spanish materials would be necessary for the implementation of this type of program and has proven difficult thus far. Materials development is one of many
challenges to be addressed in the Inga context of bilingual education efforts.

Situated within a sociohistorical context in which many Indigenous and nonindigenous members alike had long maintained the language ideology of the inherent superiority of Spanish over Quechua for academic purposes, the local language planning initiatives have met with resistance common to language revitalization efforts in similar contexts (Coronel-Molina, 2007, 2008, 2011b; King, 2004). King (2004) highlights three common challenges faced by efforts to implement enrichment heritage bilingual education in Indigenous communities: methods and materials development, reaching consensus about the dialect to be used in instruction, and attaining unity in language ideology and support across community members. The challenges of bilingual materials development and unity in community support in the Putumayo will be addressed in the next two sections. Examples of bilingual education efforts in Ecuador and Bolivia will be highlighted as examples which may shed light on possible avenues for Inga education in the Putumayo.

8. Bilingual Materials Development

The development of materials and implementation of pedagogical methodology that is culturally relevant for Inga students, as well as resources for teachers, are important for implementing a bilingual education curriculum. Having materials in Inga and bilingual Inga–Spanish is critical for carrying out the suggested program design. In addition to maintaining some teaching in the students’ native Inga language, the integration where possible of aspects of students’ native cultures can also aid L1 and L2 literacy development by allowing students to draw on background knowledge from their native language and culture. Incorporating Inga culture in the education materials will not only facilitate the learning of language and academic literacy skills, but will also promote the valuing of Inga culture, an important part of the language revitalization process. Many communities and curriculum designers serving language minority students or seeking to produce bilingual students have realized the importance of incorporating native cultural elements and forms of knowledge into language or general education. Many Inga community members and others working to provide Inga-Spanish teaching materials have recognized the need to incorporate the Inga culture into bilingual education materials.

A major challenge in the Inga context is the lack of written Inga materials, which leads to low levels of literacy in the Inga language. While Quechua has a rich history as an oral language, it has also been a written language for over 400 years. One of the major efforts of the Musu Runakuna has been to develop, through consultation with the elders, an appropriate alphabet for Inga. The number of available texts to read in
Quechua varies with the region, and texts in the Inga dialect are scarce. The lack of written materials in the Inga language logically leads to low levels of literacy, even among the Inga schoolteachers. This is problematic for Inga-Spanish bilingual education efforts.

In an attempt to help fill this literacy and materials gap, many recent efforts have taken place at Indiana University in particular where John Holmes McDowell, Francisco Tandiyo Jansasoy, and Juan Eduardo Wolf have been instrumental in creating the Inga Resource Center. One important contribution from this center is the language instruction textbooks *Inga Rimangapa ¡Samuichi! Speaking the Quechua of Colombia* (McDowell, Tandiyo Jansasoy, & Wolf, 2011) and *Inga Rimangapa ¡Samuichi! Vengan a hablar la lengua inga* (McDowell, Tandiyo Jansasoy, & Wolf, 2012) which are being distributed to bilingual teachers in Inga communities. This text is aimed primarily at helping bilingual Inga teachers improve their literacy so they can better serve the Inga children at the bilingual school. McDowell (2012) also documented a living tradition of mythic narrative among Inga in Colombia’s Sibundoy Valley. He delved into the preservation of the original flavor of the mythic narratives and ceremonial speeches in pedagogical materials.

The Inga Resource Center (online) is also producing a series of Cuadernos based on the chapters of the text and geared toward primary school learners. It will be interesting to see how these materials aid in bilingual development of Inga students. The fact that they have been developed with much consulting of Inga community members is a practice that should lend itself to success of the materials. While some bilingual Inga-Spanish materials have been created specifically for children, which have been welcomed by Inga teachers, limited time and resources has resulted in fewer than desired resources being created specifically for school children. While lack of financial backing continues to be a powerful form of resistance to the implementation of Inga-Spanish bilingual education, efforts such as these that utilize academic institutional resources could be a potential solution, as demonstrated by the valuable resources being produced by the Inga Resource Center at Indiana University. For other educational materials produced in Inga, see Cuantinjido, 1972; Chasoy Sijindoy, 1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1983); Jansasoy, 1987; Levinsohn, 1974; Mojomboy, 1972; Tandiyo Jansasoy, 1988; Tandiyo et al, 1978, 1997.

The case of Maori immersion in New Zealand demonstrates an extreme example of basing education on heritage linguistic and cultural knowledge and respect. A critical element of the success of the Maori immersion program described by Harrison (2005) is the support and contributions of the local Maori community for the program. Despite the constraints placed on the curriculum standards by the national Ministry of Education, the Waikato-Tainui tribal leaders used their constrained
power to create an alternative credit system and incorporate a tribal knowledge base in the curriculum. Students observed tribal ceremonies, took field trips to important historical and cultural sites, and became experts in a tribal knowledge base determined by tribal community leaders and parents of the students. Although the context varies greatly from that of the Ingano context in Colombia, the completely functional bilingual and bicultural individuals that have participated in the program demonstrate the potential benefits of providing both native language and native culture support in schools.

In her study of a Quechua–Spanish bilingual rural school in the department of Cochabamba in Bolivia, Hornberger (2006) observed a then-relatively new biliteracy curriculum established under the Bolivian National Education Reform of 1994. Some of the books provided by the Reform for every primary classroom include six “Big Books” in Spanish (with large pages and colorful illustrations), three of which are based on Indigenous (Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani) oral traditions (p. 285). These L2 materials that incorporate Indigenous cultural content are an example of contextualized material design, which can promote biliteracy development of Indigenous students. “Given that, in the Bakhtinian sense, an individual develops a sense of self through incorporating the languages, dialects, genres, and words of others to which she has been exposed, this biliterate practice offers a familiar voice for Indigenous children to incorporate in their own voices” (p. 286). This example provides support for the possibility of incorporating culturally relevant materials and curricula in Indigenous schools which promotes both Quechua and Spanish literacy and the Quechua language, and could be applied more directly to the Inga context. Not surprisingly, such a practice is a contentious one that may be resisted by both Indigenous and nonindigenous members who reject the merging of Indigenous content with the Spanish language (Hornberger, 2006). (For more information about Indigenous education in Bolivia, see López, 2005; Albó, 1995, 1999; Albó & Barrios Suvelza, 2007. For bilingual education in Latin America, see López, 2006; López & Rojas, 2006; López & Sichra, 2008).

Much resistance to bilingual education efforts emerges at the national level in explicit forms such as unsupportive policies, or in implicit forms such as lack of financial backing of policies. In the case of the Sibundoy Valley, for example, bilingual education endeavors, including bilingual materials development in particular, are greatly hindered by the scarcity of financial support which oftentimes has been promised but not provided, or not well distributed, by Colombia’s national government (Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, October 9, 2008). Some national government funding has been provided for the bilingual education project, and presently supports the salaries of the three Indigenous teachers. Funding is insufficient, however, to adequately
support bilingual Inga–Spanish material design and production. Insufficient funding serves as a form of resistance against bilingual education efforts, but may be overcome by bottom-up Indigenous efforts of language planning. Such language planning is taking place within a group of Inga teachers and leaders from the town of Santiago who are dedicated to the promotion of biliteracy development of Inga students and the revitalization of the Inga language.

With the collaborative goal of producing fully bilingual and bicultural individuals with high levels of L1 and L2 literacy, curriculum design and language of medium must be carefully planned in designing a program that adequately serves the bilingual needs of students. Incorporating knowledge from the minority cultural background of the students can make the curriculum more accessible and relevant to students’ experience, and promote valuing of the native culture. Also, the programs most successful at producing biliterate individuals assume that bilingual education works best when students’ L1 is developed first or simultaneously with the second language, as in the Maori immersion and Bolivian Quechua–Spanish bilingual education examples. In addition to program design and material development considerations, community support for bilingual education efforts and bilingual teacher training are critical elements to consider.

9. Community Support and Teacher Preparation

Individual and often community-wide resistance to the introduction of Quechua as a mode of classroom instruction also persists in the department of Putumayo, greatly diminishing the success of bilingual education initiatives within and across communities. Resistance to restructuring the traditional curriculum in favor of a new system created by and for Inga people has been evidenced to varying degrees within different towns of the community. This lack of unity in a desire to change the educational system among the Inga towns has helped to perpetuate the traditional colonial-based system in which Spanish dominates as the mode of instruction in classrooms. Resistance toward a system of education created by Inga members can be seen in the rejection of the Inga education project (2003) proposal which was written by a group of Indigenous teachers and leaders from the towns of San Andrés and Santiago, and submitted to the MEN in 2003 (Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, October 9, 2008). The MEN refused financial support of the project on the grounds of insufficient funds available for distribution. Teachers—both Indigenous and nonindigenous—and leaders, including Spanish priests, in other Inga towns also rejected the proposal, which was designed to apply to all Inga towns. Opponents expressed the desire to be in control of their own educational system and reserve their right to maintain the “traditional” (i.e., Spanish-based)
educational system in their communities (Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, October 9, 2008).

Nonindigenous teachers commonly believe that there is no need for the Inga students to learn their own language, and they have been able to enforce this belief through the power assigned to them via membership in local and national teachers’ unions (Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, October 9, 2008). Some Indigenous teachers often resist a shift toward teaching in Inga (and teaching the Inga language), citing as the main reason the shortage of teaching materials in Inga and the abundance and accessibility of materials in Spanish. The creation of new materials and an overhaul of the traditional system may be seen by many as unnecessary and difficult due to a lack of resources and training on curriculum and materials development within Inga communities. Perception of a need to change the current educational system as well as sufficient means for training and materials seem to be prerequisites for the possibility of enacting a restructured curriculum in the Inga community schools.

The program of education and preparation of indigenous teachers in the Putumayo region was initiated by the Ministry of Education of Colombia in 1992 to fulfill constitutional mandates to support and develop Indigenous education (ethno-education). By 2001, however, there were still no published reports about the program (Carlosama Gaviria, 2001). Indigenous teacher training in the Putumayo is still very much in the beginning stages of development, but has been addressed in literature by Carlosama Gaviria (2001) and in a collaborative educational project proposal for the creation of a bilingual intercultural educational institute submitted (but not approved) in 2003. Carlosama Gaviria (2001) continued a project started in 1990 by the MEN in which he investigated education and teacher preparation within the Inga department of Santiago in the Putumayo region of Colombia. The Musu Runakuna and other Indigenous leaders are still working on developing the initiative to provide opportunities for Inga community members to receive quality teacher training (Dover, 2005; Tandioy Jansasoy, personal communication, October 9, 2008). In addition to the training that many teachers receive at the normal schools in Colombia and elsewhere, additional training with regard to language acquisition and bilingual materials development and use would also contribute to the proposed bilingual education program reforms.

10. Conclusion and Future Directions

Language shift from Inga to Spanish has been an increasing reality in the Putumayo in recent decades. The education of Inga children mostly in Spanish by typically nonindigenous teachers who do not speak Inga has undoubtedly contributed to the shift. The accompanying lack of
schooling through the native Inga language has also likely deprived Inga students of the possibility of developing literacy and academic skills in Inga or Spanish. The present paper is an attempt to show the current educational situation of the Colombian Inga children, including recent grassroots efforts to implement Inga–Spanish bilingual education.

Bilingual education is in the early stages of development in the Putumayo Valley, and its future will depend on many factors analogous to those that have been observed repeatedly in implementations of bilingual education in other Indigenous contexts. Challenges associated with Indigenous bilingual education initiatives in the Putumayo Valley of Colombia abound, and increased support at both the national and local level is a precursor for more unified bilingual education implementation. Provision and success of bilingual programs in the Putumayo will continue to be influenced by national governmental support as well as support from community members in towns where biliteracy practices are implemented. Beginning with increased consciousness of the importance of revitalization and promotion of Inga language and culture within and among Inga communities, overturning long-established colonial educational practices in favor of Indigenous-driven biliteracy education can and hopefully will be made possible.

Drawing on research from language revitalization, bilingual intercultural education, and second language acquisition, suggestions for improving bilingual education program design, materials, and teacher training in the Inga Putumayo context have been presented. Along with sources of resistance and suggestions for overcoming them, acknowledgement of the importance of a unified grassroots support for intercultural bilingual education initiatives as a precursor for success has been made. For schools in the Putumayo to possibly reverse language shift, teachers, parents, and community members must be unified in their support for the educational initiatives, and should be well informed about program and materials designs with the best chance of producing bilingual, academically proficient students. Ethnographic research in the Inga context could present a more grounded examination of the complex situation concerning language shift, language policy and planning, and the planning and implementation of bilingual education in the Putumayo. Future planning and implementation efforts should be coordinated with the parents, elders, and teachers of the communities in the Putumayo who have already engaged in a great deal of dialog regarding Inga language and culture revitalization, largely through the implementation of bilingual education for Inga children.
References


Origins of Language Attitudes Emerge in the Perception of Foreign-Accented Speech

Rachel Kraut¹
University of Arizona

Abstract

With the rapid growth of international communication, business and immigration to English-speaking countries, native speakers (NSs) of English now frequently interact with non-native speakers (NNSs). Decades of language attitude studies indicate that interactions between NSs and NNSs of English yield a variety of sentiments and judgments, both positive and negative, of the foreign-accented speech (FAS) that is often produced by NNSs. Because NSs of English will likely encounter an increasing amount of FAS in many environments over time, it is important to understand what factors may contribute to judgments of NNSs who produce FAS. To investigate what factors may contribute to positive and negative judgments of NNSs’ FAS, a study was designed in which seventy-seven native English speakers evaluated the FAS of international students enrolled in an intensive English program at a university in the United States on degree of accent, comprehensibility and communicative ability. These ratings were correlated with listeners’ responses to questions about the nature of their interactions with NNSs, the frequency of these interactions, and their feelings about such interactions. Discourse analysis of the qualitative responses reveals trends contributing to possible origins of both positive and negative judgments of FAS and NNSs of English.

Keywords foreign-accented speech, language attitude, speech perception, speech evaluation

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalizing world in which English is one of the most commonly used languages, at any given moment it is safe to say that the majority of conversations in English are held by non-native speakers (Tapia, 2010). With the rapid growth of international communication and business through new technologies and immigration to English-speaking countries, native speakers (NSs) of English frequently interact with such non-native speakers (NNSs) in both personal and professional environments. Decades of language attitude studies indicate that communicative interactions between NSs and NNSs of English yield a variety of sentiments and judgments, positive and negative, of the foreign-accented speech (FAS) that is often produced by NNSs (e.g. Cargile, 1997; Derwing & Munro, 1997 & 2002; Fllege et al., 1995; Levi & Pisoni, 2002; Major et al., 2002). Foreign-accented speech (FAS) is defined by Derwing & Munro (1998) as “non-pathological speech produced by second language (L2) learners that differs in partially systematic ways from the speech characteristic of native speakers of a given dialect.” Because NSs of English will likely encounter an increasing amount of FAS in the workplace, business transactions, and in the

¹ Bio: Rachel Kraut is currently a PhD student in the Second Language Acquisition and Teaching program at the University of Arizona. Her research interests include the acquisition of English morphology, L2 reading strategies, and the perception of foreign-accented speech. Additionally, she is a lecturer at the Center for English as a Second Language at the University of Arizona. E-mail: rachelsales@email.arizona.edu
community, it is important to understand what factors may contribute to judgments of NNSs who produce FAS.

In their 1981(a & b) studies, Brennan & Brennan found that participants’ judgments of solidarity and status correlated with degree of accent in recordings of Spanish-accented English. A group of 37 Anglo teens and 43 teens of Mexican descent gave increased ratings on perceived level of education, socioeconomic status, intelligence, and level of success (status indicators) to speech recordings rated as having a lower degree of accent by a group of linguists. Similarly, the same group of teen raters awarded higher evaluative ratings on level of perceived friendliness, trustworthiness and kindness (solidarity indicators) to speech recordings rated as having a lower degree of accent.

Callan et al. (1983) found strikingly similar results of the correlation between evaluative ratings of solidarity and status and level of accent in their study of standard Australian English and Greek-Australian-accented English. Speakers providing recordings of Greek-Australian-accented English were rated lower on solidarity and status than the speakers of standard Australian English. Their study added to the line of work by noting significant differences in the evaluative ratings between female and male raters. More specifically, Greek-Australian female raters “were more extreme in their ratings than were Anglo-Australians and Greek-Australian male raters” (p.407). Additionally, Callan et al. discovered that the place or context in which the FAS is performed may influence evaluative ratings in that female raters across both ethnic backgrounds gave higher evaluative ratings to female speech recordings that were supposedly from an intimate setting (e.g. someone’s home) while male raters awarded higher values to female speech recordings that took place in a public setting (e.g. a school or a bus stop).

After numerous factors potentially affecting the perception and evaluative ratings of FAS came to light over the years, Piske, MacKay, and Flege (2001) produced a much-needed review consolidating the existing literature on the variables affecting the perceived degree of foreign accent that a speaker may produce. Some of the previously studied factors shown to affect the degree of accent of FAS that they review include age of L2 learning, gender of the speaker, length of residence of the speaker in the new country, amount of formal instruction of the speaker, motivation level of the speaker, language learning aptitude and language use. Following this review, the researchers presented their own study testing how age of learning, length of residence in Canada, age, gender, L1 use and L1 ability affect the perceived degree of foreign accent. For this study, a number of speech samples of Italian-accented English recorded by Italian-English bilinguals were rated by a group of native English speakers from Canada. The results revealed a number of interesting findings. For example, Italian-English bilinguals who reported that they still often speak their L1 while living in Canada were rated as having significantly stronger accents. The speakers’ length of residence in Canada as well as their self-reported ability levels in English also significantly correlated with their degree of accent ratings.
1.1. Motivation for the Current Study
To investigate factors that may potentially contribute to positive and negative judgments of NNSs’ FAS, the current study builds off of the work done by Kraut & Wulff (2013) which sought to discover the complex interactions that occur between some of the aforementioned variables during the perception of FAS. In their investigation, seventy-eight native English speakers evaluated the FAS of international students enrolled in an intensive English program in low, intermediate, and high proficiency courses at a public university in the United States on degree of accent, comprehensibility and communicative ability. These ratings, ranging from 1 to 7 on Likert scales, were correlated with listeners’ self-rated level of familiarity with FAS (low, medium, or high), the proficiency level of the speaker, the sex of the speaker, and the L1 background (Asian, Middle Eastern, or Hispanic) of the speaker. A number of interesting interactions were found to contribute to listeners’ ratings of the FAS recordings. For instance, sex of the speaker interacted with L1 background of the speaker significantly in that male speakers, regardless of their L1 background, were consistently rated higher than their female counterparts. Additionally, across proficiency levels, Asian speakers (male and female) consistently received the most negative ratings on degree of accent, comprehensibility, and communicative ability. The group receiving the next highest ratings across the three areas and all proficiency levels were the Hispanic speakers, followed by the Middle Eastern speakers receiving the highest ratings. A final noteworthy interaction occurred between the self-rated level of familiarity with FAS of the listeners and the three rating areas. A negative correlation was found between a listener’s level of familiarity with FAS and the ratings they assigned to speakers in that listeners with the lowest level of interaction and familiarity with FAS consistently gave more negative ratings on degree of accent, comprehensibility, and communicative ability (indicated by higher numbers on the Likert scales), followed by those self-rating at a medium level of familiarity and finally followed by those with the highest level of familiarity with FAS (usually ESL teachers or linguists) assigning the most positive ratings to speakers.

1.2. The Presence and Origins of Language Attitudes
While this multifactorial study certainly paints a more robust picture of the many factors in play during judgments of FAS, the quantitative data analyzed do not shed light on another variable which may be significantly contributing to ratings: the presence of preconceived attitudes or ideologies about non-native speakers of English. To probe at the question of how language attitudes or ideologies may have emerged and possibly influenced the speech ratings in this study, a portion of the data not previously analyzed will be brought to light in this paper. As mentioned in their 2013 paper, Kraut & Wulff collected a large set of more qualitative information about the participants such as whether or not they had ever taken foreign languages classes in the past or what the nature of their interactions with NNSs were (e.g. at work or in a personal environment). The responses to one question in particular will be analyzed in this paper: “Do you feel that contact with non-native English speakers is a positive or negative experience? Please explain.” This specific question was chosen for discourse
analysis because the nature of the responses given may hold some clues about the participants’ attitudes or ideologies about NNSs of English. Furthermore, the motivation for this particular analysis came about when a 2-tailed t-test revealed a significant difference between the average ratings of NNSs across degree of accent, comprehensibility, and communicative ability between those indicating that contact with NNSs as positive and those indicating such interactions as negative \( t(76) = 2.4665, p < .05 \).

2. Response Analysis

Seventy-seven responses to the aforementioned question “Do you feel that contact with non-native English speakers is a positive or negative experience? Please explain.” will be discussed in terms of how they may indicate a participant’s attitude toward NNSs of English. In the original paper, Kraut & Wulff (2013) collected responses from seventy-eight participants. However, one participant did not answer this particular question leaving only seventy-seven responses for the current analysis. The participant’s supplying these responses were a mix of laymen not frequently interacting with NNSs \( (N=42) \) and a group with higher familiarity or interaction with FAS consisting of ESL teachers and linguists \( (N=35) \). Out of the seventy-seven responses, the overwhelming majority \( (86\%) \) reported that they feel communicative interaction with NNSs of English is a positive experience for them in some way. While only the remaining 14% of participants explicitly note negative feelings about interacting with NNSs of English, a discourse analysis of both the positive and negative responses will still provide insight into the motivations for such attitudes and their corresponding judgments of FAS.

2.1. A Love of Learning, Global Points of View, and Personal Relationships

An analysis of the responses taking a positive stance on interactions with NNSs of English reveals a few common themes across participants. Consistently embedded in positive responses to this question is a love of learning. Responses such as “I feel that it can be pretty positive, since I enjoy hearing and experiencing cultures other than my own” and “It is indeed a positive experience because it allows me to learn more about the international backgrounds, politics, and history” are rather explicit statements of a love of learning about cultural and international histories as a general theme. However, many participants’ responses point toward a deeper reason for their positive attitudes towards NNSs and a love of learning about different cultures: humanitarianism. Evidence is seen for humanitarianism as one possible basis for a positive attitude towards NNSs in responses such as “… I love learning about other countries and cultures. Such interaction teaches tolerance, appreciation for the differences among ethnic groups - and shows that deep inside, on a personal level, we are all very much alike” and “… I like being around all types of people. The language they speak is not the determining factor of my care and affection for them.” Interestingly, the positive responses elaborating on this love of learning theme overwhelmingly come from participants self-rating as having a high degree of familiarity with FAS, many of whom were ESL teachers. This would seem quite logical as often times, people go into the field of education
professionally as a result of a life-long love of learning and a desire to inspire that in their students. Moreover, teachers often develop strong bonds with their students as they work with them on a daily basis striving to help them succeed. As ESL teachers, the majority of their frequent contact with NNSs is with their own students. Such a positive attitude toward NNSs in general could result from their daily interactions with their non-native-speaking students whom they may have a strong and positive relationship with.

Another theme emerging from participants’ responses depicting a positive attitude toward NNSs is that of the importance of having a global point of view. One such participant responded that “Different points of view come from different countries from the mouths of these nonnative speakers. This enriches life.” While this particular response, and many others like it, touch on the importance or fulfillment one may get from having a global viewpoint looking outward on other nations, other participants acknowledge the importance of a global viewpoint and its effects on how one sees their own culture. For example, “I also gain a perspective about American culture I would otherwise not have” shows that the participant views their interactions with NNSs as a positive event because they are able to use their increasingly globalized perspective (resulting from these interactions) to reflect on their own culture.

Lastly, many of the participants’ responses hint that their positive attitudes towards NNSs of English may have stemmed from a current or past personal relationship with a NNS. For instance, one respondent reminisced about a time in the past when they lived with “3 friends, none of whom were native speakers of English” for a period of two years. Although they did not provide much further elaboration, it can be inferred that this was given as a reason for their positive opinion of interactions with NNSs because these three friendships that had been developed over the two year period were likely strong and positive, much like the aforementioned relationships between ESL teachers and their students. Similarly, another participant who gave a positive response to this question wrote about a friend’s mother whom they were very close to: “My friend in high school’s parents were both born in Mexico. Her mom spoke very little English. But we managed to communicate and I loved her dearly.” Notably, these particular participants both self-reported as having little interaction with NNSs on a regular basis and low familiarity with FAS, yet still maintain positive stances on interactions with them. Each response cited a close personal relationship(s) with a NNS, thus, it would follow that these bonds have influenced how these participants view interactions with NNSs as a whole.

2.2. Negative Cultural Stereotypes and Frustrating Business Transactions

Although only 14% of respondents indicate negative feelings or attitudes towards interactions with NNSs of English, a look into their responses to the question under analysis shows two common themes, much like the positive responses do. Many of the negative responses give a glimpse at the attitudes of participants towards certain cultural or linguistic groups, some more explicitly stated than others. Analysis reveals that these responses are often coupled with the mention of a negative cultural stereotype. One such response was given by an ESL teacher who reported that they “have some
negative feelings towards certain cultures which tend to produce students who "cheat" a lot by U.S. standards." Anecdotally, as someone who has worked in ESL for a number of years at intensive English programs in universities around the country, I have heard numerous complaints along this line about one particular cultural group. However, I have never heard any of these teachers openly express negative feelings about this cultural group as a whole until happening upon this response which is safely guarded by anonymity; the complaints were only about the level of cheating itself. Such a response indicates that negative attitudes toward specific cultural or linguistic groups, even if they are one’s own students, can still arise if repeated actions occur that are deemed inappropriate or immoral by the rater’s own culture and that play into a cultural stereotype. These negative sentiments or the belief in such a cultural stereotype may influence a teacher’s perception of students belonging to this cultural group and their interactions with them in the workplace.

Further evidence for the association of a linguistic feature as characterizing a certain cultural group with either positive or negative feelings comes through participants’ responses in which they state that “some accents are less pleasant than others.” There have been numerous studies whose results demonstrate that the accents of various NNSs of English are a means by which native speakers of English categorize NNSs into cultural groups, whether correctly or incorrectly, and largely associate these groups with positive or negative qualities, often times feeding common cultural stereotypes (e.g. Fayer & Krasinski, 1987; Gass & Varonis, 1984; Lippi-Green, 1997; Ludwig, 1982). For example, in much of the southwestern United States, there is some level of animosity among certain groups of native English speakers towards Hispanics and their increasing numbers in states like Arizona, Texas and New Mexico. The identification of someone who is of Hispanic descent is usually facilitated by a specific phonological pattern when speaking English (i.e. an accent) as well as physical appearance and, of course, the use of the Spanish language. Many people who appear to be of Hispanic descent, based on one or more of the aforementioned characteristics, are usually assumed to be from Mexico (even though this is not always the case) due to the Southwest’s proximity to the country, and assumed to be illegally in the United States. The negative sentiment among some native English speakers in the southwest toward this group stem from beliefs that immigrants from Mexico, legal and illegal, are taking jobs from Americans and that their presence in the U.S. contributes to the poverty and criminal activity in certain cities (e.g. Valenica, 2002). Because the current study was conducted in Texas, one may assume that some of this hostility may emerge in negative responses to this question, and they would be correct. One participant replied that they felt interactions with NNSs of English are generally a negative experience because “illegal aliens like Mexicans need to learn English because not everyone knows Spanish.” It is clear from this response that this participant associates NNSs with one particular cultural group and the accompanying negative regional stereotype. It would follow that native speakers holding a similar view toward Hispanics may automatically assume that any conversational interaction with someone
who appears to be from Mexico, or possibly any NNS, is going to be an unpleasant experience.

A second theme present among the negative responses of participants has to do with frustrating business transactions. One participant stated that interactions with NNS are “negative because NNS are too difficult to understand, especially in business matters. (There is) too much miscommunication and frustration. For example, if you are trying to get some issue resolved on an account of yours and you cannot understand what they are trying to explain to you.” Another reports that “having to deal with customer service reps over the phone is more frustrating and has been a more negative experience.” A third participant replied that they work as a livestock judge in cattle contests and often have to interact with NNSs: “dealing with non-native speakers of English can be uncomfortable. Being certain that we both understand each other can be difficult but is often of utmost importance in the transaction of business.” While these responses do not necessarily play into any negative cultural stereotypes, it can be inferred that when entering a transaction involving money or some kind of capital with a NNS, many native English speakers may believe that they are going to have a difficult time achieving what they would like to in these specific kinds of situations. This attitude may be founded on past personal experience, such as the participant judging livestock events, or may stem from common jokes based on cultural stereotypes like the incomprehensible foreign customer service representative. Jokes and skits feeding this stereotype are seen in many movies and television shows such as a recent episode of the cable show Key & Peele portraying a customer service agent with a severe Indian-English accent and a commercial by Discover Card implying that many companies have frustrating over-the-phone customer service interactions because they employ NNSs of English as representatives. Either way, these particular responses reveal that negative attitudes towards interactions with NNSs may possibly be limited to particular situations (e.g. business transactions), or may result from such situations.

3. Conclusion
This paper attempts to analyze the responses of 77 participants in a perception of foreign-accented speech (FAS) study in such a way to shed more light onto their ratings of accentedness, comprehensibility, and communicative ability. All participants were asked to respond to the question “Do you feel that contact with non-native English speakers is a positive or negative experience? Please explain.” A statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in mean ratings across the aforementioned three areas among participants responding that interactions with non-native speakers of English are generally a positive experience versus those who stated that such interactions tend to be a negative experience. This statistically significant difference led to further analysis of the positive and negative responses to this question in hopes of discovering additional factors that play into the attitudes motivating participants’ perception of FAS. Discourse analysis of the responses indicating that interactions with NNSs are positive experiences revealed common themes motivating such an attitude: a love of learning, the importance of having a global point of view,
and the presence of current or past personal relationships with one or more NNSs of English. An analysis of the negative responses similarly revealed two common trends in the responses: the influence of negative cultural stereotypes and discomfort in important conversational situations like business transactions. Speech perception is a cognitively loaded process influenced by many factors simultaneously. This study provides a window into some of the factors possibly affecting the perception of FAS that are not as readily quantifiable (and thus not as easily captured) as commonly investigated variables such as sex, socioeconomic class, or age group. Because this paper is merely an introductory venture into the discovery and analysis of more masked factors in language attitude and speech perception studies, further research and more work is certainly needed. For instance, a more detailed follow-up interview with participants about the nature of their personal relationships with NNSs or their individual beliefs about common cultural stereotypes should shed more light onto the social variables affecting the perception of FAS.

References


