Multilingualism in Chile: representations of languages in Chilean news media discourse

Hanna Sliashynskaya (Newcastle University, UK)

Linguistic ideologies, or beliefs about languages and their use, are key to dynamics and changes in language choice, language minorisation and death. Linguistic ideologies, especially those of monolingualism, have long been part of policies of nation-states (Fairclough, 2015; Shohamy, 2006) despite the prevalence of multilingualism in social domains (Meyerhoff, 2008). Chile, the context of this research project, is a multilingual country with a surprisingly limited amount of language planning and policy legislation (Leclerc, 2015). In view of such laissez-faire regulations of linguistic setting, the question arises as to what causes indigenous languages to lose speakers whilst "big" languages expand further.

Thus, this research project examines the multilingual context of Chile and how dominant and minoritised languages are represented in popular national online newspapers. The collected data includes 8877 news articles published in ten most widely-read Chilean online newspapers between 2010 and 2016 and containing references to Chile's local (Mapudungún, Rapa Nui, Aymara, Quechua, Yámana, Huilliche, Qawasqar, Kunza and Spanish) and foreign languages (English), as well as bilingualism and multilingualism. The period was established due to rising importance of language in indigenous issues (Rojas, 2016) and an increase in foreign language educational policies (Minsegpres et al. 2014) in these recent years. A corpus of 3 717 129 words was compiled to reveal how media represent languages and what discursive strategies are used to conduct metalinguistic debate. Corpus-based critical discourse approach was used to analyse the data.

An exploratory analysis of the "aboutness" of the corpus has shown that *español* [1](Spanish, freq. 4712) and *inglés* (English, freq. 3749) appear among the top 10 most frequent lexical words in the corpus which is indicative of their prominent presence in linguistic talk in the Chilean online newspapers. For comparison, only *chino* (Chinese, freq. 654) and *mapudungún* (freq. in all spelling variations 1197) appear among top 10 of two sub-corpora. Such frequencies suggest that the media tend to report more on dominant languages which can be explained by Spanish being the official language of the country and English the only foreign language taught in public education. However, a closer look at the context and use of further techniques is necessary to explain why this is the case (Baker, 2006, p. 56).

As this study focuses on representations, the corpus tool to approach the analysis beyond wordlist was collocation, as meanings of collocates of a word contribute to the meaning of the word itself (Baker et al., 2008, p. 278). When looking at collocates of '*bilingüe*" in its different forms (1 025 occurrences), languages appeared among significant collocates: Spanish (MI 7.61), Mapudungún (MI 6.29) and English (MI 5.88) among others.

Although the strength of collocation suggests otherwise, English is linked to bilingualism much stronger than other varieties in Chilean online news. This became apparent upon examination of concordance lines.

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[1] Translations from Spanish undertaken by the author.

Some examples from the corpus show how often in reporting bilingualism is understood and reported as the ability to speak English.

This is clear from speeches of educational authorities (see Figure 1), which try to justify the necessity to learn English appealing to a 'national goal'. *Emol.cl* here quotes the Minister of Education Joaquín Lavín. In his speech, he uses deictic '*lo que queremos*' (what we want) and '*todo el mundo*' (everyone) when justifying the reasons for learning English which hardly builds up a strong argument. From this quote, it becomes clear that Chile has not yet started to 'become' a bilingual nation despite numerous indigenous languages spoken in the country. However, according to the minister, it is high time that bilingualism in Chile is measured. Here a presupposition that readers understand bilingualism as the ability to speak English is present, as this piece of news reports on the introduction of a new nation-wide English test.

"… *lo que queremos es que Chile comience a medirse en términos de inglés. Todo el mundo dice que Chile debe convertirse en un país bilingüe, pero en algún momento hay que partir*"	'… *what we want is for Chile to start measuring itself in terms of English. Everyone says that Chile must become a bilingual country but at some point, we need to start*'

(Emol.cl, 2010)
Figure 1 Bilingualism and English language in education debates

Another example of such assumption on behalf of the authorities is illustrated in Figure 2. In addition to reinforcing the idea of monolingual Chile ('*the intention of our country "to become a bilingual nation"*'), Chancellor Moreno in his meeting with Hillary Clinton stated that to achieve a bilingual nation it is necessary to bring teachers from abroad, that is, native speakers of English. In line with the previous example, the presupposition here is that speaking English is a universal good that children should not be deprived of. Thus, this example shows once again the superior position of English in educational discourse and demonstrates the 'myth of native speaker' (Davies, 2003) in educational debates, or the idea of superiority of native speakers when it comes to teaching a language.

'*uno de los temas centrales fue la intención de nuestro país "de convertirse en una nación bilingüe donde todos los niños tengan oportunidad de hablar inglés", para lo cual ambos estudiaron opciones sobre "cómo trasladar profesores de inglés"*'	'*One of the central topics was the intention of our country "to become a bilingual nation where all children have the opportunity to speak English", for which both explored the options of "how to bring in teachers of English"*'

(Emol.cl, 2011)
Figure 2 Bilingualism and English in education debates

On the other hand, Mapudungún also appears in connection to bilingualism in educational debate when the possibility of opening bilingual kindergartens is discussed on *BioBio.cl*. However, here the discourse of endangerment and death of the language is dominant whilst no emphasis is made on individuals or the country becoming bilingual (see Figure 3).

"Así como no podemos entregar tierras sin apoyo productivo tampoco podemos dejar que de aquí al 2030 no quede ningún hablante de nuestras lenguas indígenas, porque un pueblo sin lengua tiende a desaparecer", señaló el directivo. (Lavado, 2012)

"Just as we cannot give away land without productive support, we cannot allow that from now until 2030 there is not a single speaker of our indigenous languages left, because a people without a language tends to disappear," said the director.

Figure 3 Discourse of endangerment in educational debates

The above examples relate to the idea of "elite" and "folk" bilingualism (de Mejía, 2002; Guerrero, 2010) when bilingualism is perceived rather as the ability to speak two European languages, whilst indigenous languages are not seen as adding up to bilingual condition but rather as "*a dialect that is part of their identity and their sense of belonging*" (Lavado, 2012).

These and other examples of metalanguage in the corpus demonstrate the media's affordances to transmit and reinforce linguistic ideologies, often in very subtle ways. In view of scarce language policies in Chilean context, the possible effect of media coverage of language matters on the public opinion and perceptions of them cannot be underestimated and the media's representations of dominant and minoritised varieties can contribute to maintaining the linguistic status quo.

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