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SPANISH IN BRAZIL: LANGUAGE POLICY, BUSINESS, AND CULTURAL PROPAGANDA

(Received 14 October 2005; accepted in revised form 26 June 2006)

ABSTRACT. The purpose of this article is to describe and analyze the policies designed and implemented since the early nineties by Spanish government agencies in order to promote Spanish as a valuable international language. In particular, we focus on its promotion in Brazil and on the strategies used to legitimize not only the presence of the language in various domains (e.g. the educational system) but also the active participation of Spanish institutions in its spread. Through a detailed analysis of a corpus of relevant texts, (a) we critically examine the cultural, economic, and political roots of these policies, as well as the rhetoric used to provide them with legitimacy; (b) we explore their connection to national language and global language ideologies; and (c), on the basis of our findings and related work done by other scholars, we argue for the need to develop a comparative strand in the analysis of the international promotion of languages.

KEY WORDS: Brazil's language policy, language and globalization, language commodification, linguistic diffusion, linguistic imperialism, linguistic ideologies, Spain's language policy

ABBREVIATIONS: RAE – Spanish Royal Academy

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to describe and analyze the policies designed and implemented by Spanish government agencies – with the assistance of the Spanish Royal Academy (RAE), linguists, language teaching professionals, and corporations – in order to promote Spanish as a valuable international language and to fuel its popularity in Brazil. We will critically examine the economic and political roots of these policies, explore their connection to nationalist and global language ideologies (Heller, 1999a, b; Kroskrity, 2000; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity 1998), and, on the basis of our findings, call for the development of a comparative strand in

the analysis of the international promotion of languages (Phillipson, 1997; Spolsky, 2004).

When we affirm the “critical” nature of our study, we take a clear position vis-à-vis language and language policy. First, we declare our concern with language as a sociocultural phenomenon, as practice inscribed in a system of relations of power and solidarity. Secondly, we side with scholars who, in the study of international languages, seek to expose inter and intralinguistic hierarchization; the social, political, and economic conditions that favor language spread; and the interests and ideologies involved in language promotion.¹ Thus, from a critical perspective, we hope to understand language policy’s involvement in a system of power relations, and the degree to which ideas about language and specific language planning efforts correct or perpetuate unjust and unequal social structures (Calvet, 1974, 1987; Heller, 1999a, b; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992).

THE CORPUS

Over the years, the institutions leading the design and implementation of Spain’s policies promoting the international status of Spanish have created a number of forums for discussion and coordination of efforts. As a result, a corpus of relevant texts is now available. First, we have the annual reports (*Anuarios*) published since 1998 by the Cervantes Institute – the Spanish government’s agency in charge of promoting Spanish internationally – under the general title *El español en el mundo* (“Spanish in the world”).² The annual reports have included prestigious sociolinguists among their contributors and have addressed a variety of topics: the status of Spanish in different regions (Brazil, the United States, Europe, the Maghreb); its status in international organizations, scientific publications, and the media; activities associated with language industries; and its relation to the Spanish economy and to Spain’s investments in Latin America. The Cervantes has also co-sponsored three conferences on the Spanish language: the first in 1997 in Zacatecas, Mexico; the second in 2001 in Valladolid, Spain; and

¹ We share Phillipson’s concern about terms such as language spread, which seem to assume an agentless process (along the lines followed by Crystal (2003) in his right-place-at-the-right-time view of global English).

² For the Cervantes see www.cervantes.es and for the annual reports <http://cvc.cervantes.es/obref/anuario/>.

the third in 2004 in Rosario, Argentina. For the present study we selected the Valladolid proceedings since they contain the greatest number of essays relevant to our topic. Finally we combed the digital edition of the Madrid daily *EL PAÍS* from 1999 to September 2005. This provided us with a more complete and accurate description of the policies under study, with valuable information on these policies' repercussions in the media and, consequently, on the operations of one of the most important instruments for the creation of public opinion on language (see Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998 for a similar methodology).

THE CONTEXTS

In order to fully understand the motivations and consequences of the policies promoting Spanish in Brazil, we must take into account a number of relevant contexts.

First, we must consider the perspective provided by all of Spain's contemporary language policies, that is, those designed by autonomous communities such as the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia, and those designed by the central government on behalf of Spanish. What are the goals and strategies of these policy-making agencies and how do they relate to one another? (del Valle, 2005; Mar-Molinero, 2000; Sánchez & Dueñas, 2002).

The second relevant perspective is provided by Brazil itself and its efforts (or lack thereof) to manage Portuguese, as well as immigrant and indigenous languages. What is Brazil's linguistic ecology, what role does the educational system play in the production and reproduction of language ideologies, and what can the impact of the promotion of Spanish be? (Bagno, 2003; Bortoni-Ricardo, 2005; Faraco, 2001)³.

The third context is provided by processes of language spread and policies that promote the international dominance of certain languages. Why and how do languages spread? To what extent is the spread of English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish comparable? And similarly, how is their international promotion related? What are the differences and similarities among institutions such as the British Council, the Alliance Française, the Instituto Camões, and the Cervantes?

³ See also a collection of essays edited by Gilvan Müller de Oliveira and Klaus Zimmermann in 2004 for *Revista Internacional de Lingüística Iberoamericana*, *RILI* II, 1(3):9-162.

Naturally, the present study, which focuses on the analysis of *Spain's* language policies in Brazil, cannot address all of the issues raised by such a vast research program. We are aware that a better understanding of the issues we touch upon will require the pursuit of topics such as the policies that countries like Argentina, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Uruguay, or Venezuela may be implementing, the role of regional rivalries and alliances in attitudes towards Spanish varieties, and, of course, policies and attitudes surrounding the promotion of Spanish in Brazil from Brazil's internal perspective. However, although we acknowledge the limits of our scope and perspective, we hope to unveil what the overall objectives of Spain's language policy are and how they manifest themselves in the promotion of Spanish in Brazil, to assess how such policy may impact Brazil's linguistic ecology, and to discuss how it may relate to, and even lead us to fine-tune, theoretical concepts such as *linguistic imperialism* (Phillipson, 1992) or *linguistic commodification* (Heller, 1999a, b).

SPAIN'S LANGUAGE POLICIES

After General Franco's death in 1975 and the approval of a new Constitution in 1978, Spain was divided into autonomous communities, several of which became officially bilingual. In that context, a series of policies were designed to standardize Basque, Catalan, and Galician and to restore their usage to all domains. These efforts have received abundant attention both from professional linguists and the media due not only to their intrinsic interest, but also to their complex involvement in Spain's controversial national question and territorial politics (Mar-Molinero, 2000; Ridruejo, 2004; Turell, 2001).

Beginning in the early nineties, a new set of language management measures, now in support of Spanish, were adopted by the central government. The aim was to develop a language policy that matched the cultural, political, and social needs of a "new" Spain that, after joining NATO and the EU and giving birth to several transnational corporations, saw itself as an important international player. Corpus planning remained in the hands of the RAE, the institution created in 1713 after the model of the French Academy. The RAE's recent activity has been intense: it has updated the old codification and elaboration projects (i.e. the new editions of the *Diccionario*, *Ortografía*, and *Gramática*) and initiated new ones (e.g. the *Diccionario Panhispánico de Dudas*). New status planning efforts were also launched with two principal objectives: to

strengthen the unity of Spanish and to promote it internationally. The first of these goals was mainly pursued through the renovation and modernization of the RAE. This institution, historically associated with archaic purism and Eurocentric Hispanism, has made considerable efforts to project an image of modernity and commitment to pan-Hispanic brotherhood: it has modernized both its infrastructures, declared an open attitude towards actual usage and variation, and, especially, committed to a permanent and close collaboration with the Association of Academies of the Spanish Language,⁴ which brings together Spanish language agencies from all Spanish-speaking countries.⁵

In 1991, the Spanish government created the Cervantes Institute in order to provide leadership in the international promotion of the language. It was originally created under the umbrella of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is currently also under the oversight of the Ministry of Culture. This institution has done its part to give Spain and Spanish an image of modernity through language teaching and the organization of cultural activities in the countries where it has established a presence: “The Cervantes Institute is a public institution created by Spain in 1991 in order to promote and teach Spanish and to spread Spanish and Spanish American culture” (all translations are ours).⁶ As we can see, the Institute assists the RAE in reinforcing pan-Hispanic unity by committing to the promotion of cultural productions from both sides of the Atlantic.

In recent years, one of the RAE’s and the Institute’s main concerns has been to provide the Spanish language with a public image that would smooth the progress of its acceptance as Spain’s common language – against the constant questioning of its status by Basque, Catalan, and Galician nationalists – and as a prestigious international language – that chases the all-powerful English and challenges the international prominence of old prestigious tongues such as French or German. This image has been built around four notions (del Valle, 2005):⁷ first, Spanish is a language of encounter, that is, an instrument for the expression of multiple cultures and a symbol of the spirit of democratic harmony; second, Spanish is not only an

⁴ For information see www.rae.es.

⁵ Efforts to consolidate the pan-Hispanic community are to be understood in the context of the complex and tense post-colonial relations between Spain and its former colonies (del Valle & Gabriel-Stheeman, 2002).

⁶ http://www.cervantes.es/seg_nivel/institucion/Marcos_institucion_principal.jsp

⁷ Many similarities can be found between this image and the views under which the spread of English is seen as “natural, neutral and beneficial” (Pennycook, 1994: 7–11).

international but also a global language; third, its status as the common language of many nations renders it a symbol of universalism that overpowers the dangers of ethnic and national loyalties;⁸ and finally, Spanish is a useful and profitable language, and knowledge of it may constitute a valuable economic asset for those who possess it:

A commitment to Spanish as a language for the future, as a vehicle for the progress and well-being of societies in the years to come, is not simply the result of cultural arguments: it has a strong economic base too (García Delgado, 2001).

SPANISH AS COMMODITY

There is plenty of evidence in our corpus of the priority given by Spain's language policy agencies to the promotion of Spanish as a valuable language and the organization of a business sector around this commodity. In 1996, for example, the "Association for the Advancement of Spanish as an Economic Resource" was created in Spain. In 2001, the Cervantes Institute's annual report devoted several articles to the subject and the Second Conference on the Spanish Language, held in Valladolid, included a section entitled "The economic value of Spanish". One of the plenary lectures, "The economic potential of Spanish," was delivered by Enrique V. Iglesias, at the time President of the Interamerican Development Bank in Washington, D.C. In 2004, Juan Ramón Lodaes, Professor at the *Autónoma* University of Madrid, published in *EL PAÍS* an article entitled "Español S.A." ("Spanish, Inc."), in which he stated:

You won't be surprised if I tell you that tourism is one of our main industries. But, can you guess what other sector in Spain produces a similar percentage of wealth? Our common language. Yes, that's right, the Spanish language. It isn't difficult to understand why: language is an apparently immaterial resource, however, there is no economic or business activity in which language is not involved ... In sum, an interesting product associated with that precise brand and with that precise image: *Spanish* (*EL PAÍS*, 19 July 2004).

The analysis of the texts selected for our study reveals that the goals and strategies proposed are indeed the result of economic motivations and follow a fundamentally business logic. The exploitation of the economic weight of Spanish is planned around two main projects: first, the development of a linguistic industry

⁸ While in these discourses the Spanish language is presented as diametrically opposed to nationalism, del Valle (2005) argues that in the construction of the pan-Hispanic community the conceptual structure of linguistic nationalism is still used as a foundation.

devoted to teaching and promoting Spanish as a foreign language (*ELE*, acronym for “Español como Lengua Extranjera”) and to stimulating interest in its study taking full advantage of the conditions that may favor its spread in each region (for example, the growing Hispanic population in the U.S. or the signing of Mercosur in Brazil). Second, it is hoped that the popularity of Spanish will translate into an increase in the consumption of cultural products in which Spanish is used (e.g. film, literature, music).

These two projects were clearly described in the Valladolid conference. First, teaching as business:

One of the first and most immediate economic dimensions of language has to do with teaching as a business activity, an area that lends itself to entrepreneurial initiatives (García Delgado & Alonso, 2001).

And second, culture as market:

We must also consider the possibilities associated with the commercialization of products that depend centrally on language ... such as literature, music, theater, or film (*ibid.*).

Óscar Berdugo, founder in 1996 of the Association for the Advancement of Spanish as an Economic Resource, described his goals in similar terms. The creation of a linguistic industry should produce “a complex cultural symbol that ... would facilitate the penetration of those markets by various services and products under the umbrella of that generic brand called ‘Spanish’ or ‘things Spanish’”. The business and advertising potential of the language had been noticed a few years earlier by Fernando Rodríguez Lafuente, Director of the Cervantes between 1999 and 2001: “Brazil has a population of 165 million; of which 50 million are students. Approximately 200,000 Spanish teachers will need to be trained. This will be followed by the book, film, and music industries” (qtd. in *EL PAÍS*, 4 October 99).

THE LINGUISTIC IMPACT OF LIBERALIZATION AND MERCOSUR

As Rodríguez Lafuente indicated, one of the markets penetrated by the spearhead of language is precisely Brazil. The interest of Spain’s language policy agencies in this country is to be understood against the backdrop provided by Spain’s economic growth in the late eighties, the liberalization of Latin American economies in the nineties, and the consequent arrival of transnational corporations

(including many originating in Spain) in a continent that was now open to international investment (Bonet & de Gregorio, 1999).

In such circumstances, the predisposition of Iberian capital to cross the Atlantic coincided with (we will return to this “coincidence”) an increased interest in Spanish within Brazil itself. The arrival of Spanish capital seems to have been one of the factors that encouraged Brazilians to learn Spanish:⁹

Today, companies such as Endesa, BBVA, Iberdrola, BSCH, Unión Fenosa, Telefónica, Dragados, ThyssenKrupp, Repsol and many other smaller ones, are creating an immense amount of jobs in Brazil, and the arrival of business executives and managers [from Spain] has made learning the language unavoidable (Avogadro, 2001).

Another major factor in the popularity of Spanish was the creation of the South American Common Market (*Mercosur*) and the cultural and economic opportunities that it provided for many Brazilians. The Treaty of Asunción, signed in 1991 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, was created to promote free trade within the region and confirmed its own continent as the main front in Brazil’s foreign policy: “The priority in Brazil’s foreign policy is South America” (President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva qtd. in *EL PAÍS*, 24 February 2003).

THE BILL: PL 3987/2000

In the Treaty of Asunción, the signing countries declared both Spanish and Portuguese official in institutional contexts within the region (Chapter II, Article 17). As we just saw, Mercosur produced an auspicious climate for Spanish in Brazil, so auspicious that the government of Itamar Franco developed a project to enhance its presence in the educational system. In 1993, the government presented a bill that made Spanish mandatory in Brazilian education. Pressure from countries promoting other languages and the possible unconstitutionality of certain aspects of the bill forced the government to modify the proposal: students would not be forced to study Spanish but it would be compulsory for schools to offer it. A new reform reduced the scope of the law, which would now apply only to secondary and the last stages of elementary education. The bill (PL 3987/2000) was finally passed by Congress, approved by the Senate,

⁹ Along with the advertising potential of the Barcelona Olympics and Seville’s World Exhibition in 1992, and Paulo Coelho’s successful book *O Diário de um Mago*.

and signed by the president on 5 August 2005 (Lei 11.161).¹⁰ As we finish this article, negotiations with Spain continue: “Debt with Spain may be forgiven in exchange for teacher training.”¹¹

THE PROMOTION OF SPANISH IN BRAZIL: A VIEW FROM SPAIN

The Spanish monarchs’ trip to Brazil happened at a time when the largest and most highly populated country in Latin America ... is undergoing a process of modernization. The recovery requires more foreign, national, and private investments. The presence of the monarchs strengthened the growing cultural and business bonds with a country of continental dimensions that has already become the eighth economy in the world ... In the last three years, Brazil has become Spain’s largest business partner in Latin America, and in the last two cycles direct Spanish investment has reached more than \$10 billion. In a short period of time, Spain has become the second investor in Brazil, after the U.S.A.: some Spanish multinationals are investment leaders in sectors such as telecommunications, banking, and electricity, and the prospects are growing as a result of the privatization of public companies (*EL PAÍS*, 14 July 2000)

In this newspaper editorial, the trip was set against the backdrop of Brazil’s strategic value for Spain’s multinational corporations. It had been designed as a contribution to the linguistic campaign whose goal was to earn the sympathy of Brazilian legislators, who, precisely in those days, were debating PL 3987/2000: “The Monarchs Travel to Brazil in Order to Support the Teaching of Spanish in Schools” (*EL PAÍS*, 10/7/2000) (see also Bugel, 2004, 2005). The Royal trip took place in the midst of an intense diplomatic battle in which, according to *EL PAÍS*, the British, French, and Italians desperately tried to stop the legislation:

Lira, who openly acknowledges having been pressured to reject the legislation by the Italian, the French, and the British, has presented the commission with a very negative report (*EL PAÍS*, 18 June 2000).

Of course, a lot was at stake:

the repercussions for Spain are gigantic. Not only for Spanish companies already established in Brazil such as *Telefónica*, *BBVA*, or *Repsol*, but also and especially for publishers, writers, and for the cultural world in general (*ibid.*).

And naturally, Spain did not remain passive in the face of such opposition. Instead, they engaged the elite diplomatic units, namely, the King and Queen, as we just saw, and the Minister of Culture:

¹⁰ For the text of the Law see http://www.presidencia.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2004-2006/2005/Lei/L11161.htm.

¹¹ More information on the topic can be found at <http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=2431&FlagNoticias=1&Itemid=2554>.

In fact, Spain has made some diplomatic efforts to push for the law's approval. It is in this context, for example, that we should see Mariano Rajoy's trip to Brazil last year; Rajoy, Minister of Culture at the time, was reassured by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso that the law would be passed. And just last Wednesday Cardoso received the Prince of Asturias Prize for Cooperation as a recognition of his work for "strengthening democratic values" and also for his support "for the Spanish language in Brazil" (*ibid.*).

And the Spanish campaign did in fact try to take full advantage of the awarding of the Prize to Cardoso:

As a first step, the vote has been postponed until November so that there is time to change the position of the Ministry of Education and give the Brazilian President the Prince of Asturias Prize for Cooperation ... The Spanish Embassy managed to postpone it until August so that it wouldn't coincide with the Monarchs' visit. It was hoped that the Monarchs could influence Cardoso (9 August 2000).

The efforts were not in vain, and, as we saw, the law was passed on 5 August 2005.

The complex history of PL 3987/2000 shows how closely related politics and language policy can be, and confirms the strategic value of language for the Spanish government. *EL PAÍS*'s coverage of the subject bears witness to its tactical importance. The large number of articles devoted to the topic insistently emphasize the popularity of Spanish: Brazilian students are quoted affirming its usefulness and so are teachers who declare and justify their support for Spanish. There are times when the linguistic bonanza unleashes the patriotic enthusiasm of journalists: falling prey to rhetorical overkill, they reveal the emotions and fantasies awakened by the renewed Spanish expansion in America: "Spanish Conquers Brazil" (*EL PAÍS*, 8 May 2000).

In addition to rousing us with effusive headlines, these articles carefully inform their readers of the implementation problems associated with the "Spanish" bill. They focus on the scarcity of teaching materials and the shortage of well trained staff – problems that were pointed out by the law's opponents.

It was acknowledged that the estimated need for 200,000 Spanish teachers and adequate teaching materials would pose a challenge to Brazilian authorities once the proposal was made into law, but the press also saw Brazil's need as an unquestionable opportunity for the language industry created around ELE. Francisco Moreno (Director of the Institute's office in São Paulo for many years) put it in the following terms:

the need for the acceleration of Spanish language teachers training is obvious. In this context, the recent inauguration of the Cervantes' Teacher Training Center in Brazil can be considered timely ... all industries related to the Spanish language could experience significant growth, especially the publishing industry: without a doubt, many Spanish, Argentinean, and of course Brazilian publishers could realize significant profits ... Brazilians' increased familiarity with the Spanish-speaking world will open the doors for numerous companies, *Spanish ones for example*, which may find a fantastic market in a country that wants to grow and modernize immediately (Moreno, 2000, emphasis added).

This new professional opportunity must have generated a great deal of enthusiasm among Spain's college students in the humanities (many of them unemployed). One can imagine a similarly enthusiastic response among Argentineans, Uruguayans, Paraguayans, or, for that matter, Brazilians who might want to acquire the necessary preparation and pursue a career teaching ELE. Faced with this potential clientele, Spain's language policy agencies have tried to take positions in order to control teacher training and become the main administrators of linguistic competence certification:

Since 1998 and without subtracting anything from the universities's irreplaceable role, Spanish teacher training has become a new source of activity in São Paulo's Cervantes Institute (*ibid.*).

They are also interested in promoting the DELE certificate, "official title that certifies the degree of competence and control of the Spanish language and is granted by the Cervantes Institute on behalf of Spain's Ministry of Education and Science."¹² It is important to keep in mind that in 1996, the Brazilian Ministry of Education

accepted, for those who have a high school diploma and a DELE Advanced accreditation, the possibility of being certified to teach Spanish in primary and secondary education (*ibid.*).

Moreno, in the conclusions to his report, offered some recommendations to the Brazilian government:

faced with the need to train new teachers, Brazil's Ministry of Education should keep in mind that Law 9394/96, Guidelines and Principles for National Education, could *allow universities to recognize the Advanced DELE* so that college graduates, with appropriate pedagogical qualifications, could be certified to teach Spanish at the primary level. ... Similarly, it would be important for Brazil's government to *ease the legal requirements so that well trained and properly qualified Spanish teachers* could come into the country in order to compensate for the current lack of teachers. And it would also be important that Brazil *recognize teacher training*

¹² <http://cvc.cervantes.es/aula/dele>.

graduate programs from Spanish universities, where many Brazilians are currently studying (*ibid.*, emphasis added)

Another problem faced by Brazil's educational system is the lack of appropriate materials for teaching Spanish. As the Spanish press readily pointed out, this is also a great opportunity for Spain's ELE industry:

the availability in Brazil of *EL PAÍS*'s international edition has been very well received. Teaching materials are at the same time a challenge and a business opportunity for publishers (*EL PAÍS*, 8 May 2000), the market of Spanish textbooks alone would entail more than 25,000 million pesetas (*EL PAÍS*, 18 June 2000).

The popularity of Spanish in Brazil and its spread as a foreign language in the educational system will play right into the hands of another important Spanish industrial sector: tourism. In fact, the Secretary General for Tourism, Juan José Güemes Barrios, was invited to the Valladolid conference, where he summarized the conclusions of a study on the subject (*El turismo idiomático en España*, Turespaña, Colección de Estudios de Productos Turísticos, Madrid, 2001) and the goals of the Plan for the Promotion of Linguistic and Cultural Tourism, both sponsored by his department. In his lecture he emphasized the common interests of language policies and tourism policies:

Linguistic tourism contributes to the fulfillment of some of the main goals of tourism policy, namely diversification, deseasonalization, and profitability. As we work to reach these tourism policy goals, we also contribute to the promotion of Spanish throughout the world, a fundamental language policy objective (Güemes Barrios, 2001).

Güemes Barrios also referred to the close collaboration between his department (which falls under the Ministry of Economy) and the Cervantes (which falls under Foreign Affairs and Culture):

Part V of the Plan contains, firstly, supply improvement measures that will be implemented jointly by the Ministries of Economy ..., Education, Culture, and Sports, and the Cervantes Institute ... In addition to improving our offerings, the Plan proposes promotion and support of commercialization measures, included in a marketing plan for linguistic tourism, that will be developed with help from the Foreign Trade Institute and the Cervantes Institute (*ibid.*).

Once again the language policy-business connection is clearly exposed. If Brazilians' contributions to Spain's linguistic tourism sector is still not great, it is expected to grow, especially after the successful endorsement of PL 3978/2000:

in 1998 the number of Brazilians who studied abroad grew to 75,000, that is, a 25% increase in comparison to 1997. Of them, approximately 4% – some 2,400 students – chose Spain as their destination, mostly to learn Spanish. Travel to other Spanish-speaking countries that may be closer is however impaired by a more limited offer of language courses and, given the present conditions of Latin-American economies, by considerably higher prices (Moreno, 2000).

The last piece of information reminds us of another issue frequently mentioned by the agents and observers of Spain's language policy: the popularity of Spanish in Brazil is linked to a greater interest not only in the Hispanic world but also, and especially, in Spain. In fact, in our corpus we have identified a tension between, on the one hand, the will to present the spread of Spanish as a foreign language as beneficial for all Hispanic nations, and on the other, the (often enthusiastic) affirmation of Spain's obvious advantage in the competition with other Spanish-speaking countries. In his report, Moreno also mentioned some of Spain's advantages vis-à-vis other Spanish-speaking countries, and explained Brazil's preference for Spain in the following terms:

In Brazil we can see an inclination toward Spanish things, including the European varieties of the language, that we don't find (at least not at the same level) toward Hispanic things associated with neighboring American countries. This is particularly evident in the case of Argentina: if, in this regard, geographic distance is an advantage for Spain, geographic proximity is a disadvantage for Argentina, due to its association with rivalries that go far beyond proximity in time or space (*ibid.*).

We have encountered numerous references to the popularity of "Spain", "Spanish things" or "Spanish culture," and some are direct and openly enthusiastic references to Brazil's preference for Spain:

The (Spanish) ambassador was impressed by the enthusiasm shown by Brazilian teachers toward the Spanish language. 'When I arrived in Brazil, I thought that there would be only one Spanish ambassador, but today I realize that there are more than 800, because every single one of you is an ambassador for Spain,' Cordech said to the participants for the enthusiasm they showed towards the Spanish language. Cordech underscored how important it is for Spain not to waste this historical opportunity which has emerged with the general excitement in Brazil towards Spanish and Spain's culture (*EL PAÍS*, 24 September 2001).

SUMMARY

In sum, from the foregoing data we conclude that Spain's language policy agents firmly believe that the establishment of business links

between Spain and Brazil (that is, safeguarding Brazil's strategic value for Spain) must go hand in hand with tight and solid cultural bonds, and that an essential instrument for bringing the two countries together is language (that is, encouraging Brazilians to learn Spanish). Consequently, they design and implement language policies that will further fuel the existing popularity of Spanish and endorse diplomatic actions to support legislative initiatives favoring its presence as a mandatory foreign language in the educational system. The belief is that through Spanish as a foreign language the linguistic industry will prosper and Spain's image will improve. The popularity of everything Spanish and positive attitudes towards Spain will in turn stimulate the purchase of products associated with this country and will create a predisposition of tolerance toward the presence of Spanish corporations.

These policies are consistent with those of other countries that engage in the international promotion of their respective languages (Calvet, 1987; Pennycook, 1994, Phillipson, 1992; Wright, 2004). In all these cases, the goal is, on the one hand, to consolidate the power and influence of one or more central countries (such as France within *la francophonie* or the UK and the USA in the English-speaking world). In the Spanish-speaking world, this goal is pursued mainly by the RAE through the consolidation of the Association of Academies of the Spanish Language and the consequent legitimation of the Spanish institution's leadership role. On the other hand, the goal of these policies is to use the teaching of the language in other regions as a source of income, of course, but also as an instrument of cultural propaganda that supports the economic and political interests of the country or countries formulating the policy. In the Spanish-speaking world, this goal is pursued by private and public agents under the leadership of the Cervantes Institute.

THE NATURE OF THE SPANISH-BRAZILIAN FRATERNITY

When dealing specifically with the promotion of Spanish in Brazil from a critical rather than descriptive perspective, we find it essential to call attention to certain aspects of these policies that may not be fully visible.

While declarations of friendship and the rhetoric of cooperation dominate public references to the interaction between these two

countries, we must not lose sight of the fact that the point of departure is an unequal relationship. There are important inequalities between Spain and Brazil and some manifest themselves in the realm of language policy: for example, Brazil's interest in Spanish is not paralleled by a similar interest in Portuguese among Spaniards. In our corpus we found almost no references to the possible encouragement of the study of Portuguese in Spain. Such a policy could be justified on the basis of Portugal being Spain's closest neighbor and Brazil being a partner and friend whose culture, history and present reality should be more familiar to Spaniards. We have not found, however, any proposals for the promotion of Portuguese in Spain or any calls to develop a better understanding of Brazil's culture and history.¹³ There is one notable exception, which, as usual, confirms the validity of the rule. Once Law 11.161 went into effect, the Brazilian government demanded that Spain and the rest of Spanish-speaking countries encourage the study of Portuguese. A year earlier, Tarso Genro, Brazil's Minister of Education, had already said: "I think reciprocity is essential. In other words, Portuguese should become a second language in Spanish-speaking countries and Spanish in Portuguese-speaking ones" (*EL PAÍS*, 7 June 2004). The editorial that addressed the issue a few weeks later agreed:

the Brazilian government has asked for reciprocity from its Spanish counterpart so that Portuguese can be promoted in Spain. Seems fair. As fair as providing the means for Lula to reach the goal of bringing Spanish teachers and study materials to all secondary level students (*EL PAÍS* 1 September 2004).

Yes, the response was favorable ("it seems fair"), but succinct; and immediately followed by a statement of the "altruistic" desire to help President Lula by providing teachers, training courses, materials, etc. Our ironic highlighting of "altruistic" is not meant to question the motives of many of those individuals who participate in the implementation of these policies, but rather to underscore the complex interplay of national interests and international networks of commerce and language policy projection: no matter how much the official rhetoric emphasizes cooperation and friendship between the two countries (and it most certainly does), the policy is designed to serve Spain's geopolitical needs and the ambitions of Spain-based transnational corporations.

¹³ The extent to which this may indeed be happening within Mercosur is worthy of investigation.

THE NATURE OF PAN-HISPANIC FRATERNITY

A second and important inequality is found in the relationship between Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries. Irala (2004) pointed out how paradoxical Spain's protagonism was in the diplomatic brawl surrounding PL 3987/2000:

Since Brazil is the reference point, it is at the very least contradictory that Spain should be the most interested country in making Spanish mandatory, since in that sense, the countries most involved and interested in the issue should have been the regional block members (Irala, 2004: 115).

As we noted above, the promoters of Spanish are acutely aware that Mercosur was the key that opened the doors to Brazil's linguistic market, a market in which Spanish-speaking Latin-American countries are serious competitors. Óscar Berdugo's words are revealing:

Spain's geographic location, eccentric with respect to the rest of the Spanish-speaking community, may leave us in a marginal position if the offer in other Spanish-speaking countries begins to develop and consolidate. This should not be interpreted only in terms of continuous profit: much more is at stake. It is the possibility of being, as a country, left out of the decision making process that will determine this sector's development. This weakness can easily be turned into strength if the sector in Spain manages to maintain a leadership position that keeps it as a referent in management or technological innovation issues. It may also become a strength if the sector is capable of promoting spaces of cooperation instead of competition with other Spanish-speaking countries ... The circumstances are favorable to the internationalization of Spanish companies, which may open subsidiaries in Spanish-speaking countries, which may in turn lead to positions from which to confront the expected increase and improvement of these countries' offer (Berdugo, 2001).

It is precisely against the backdrop of this expected competition that we must place the references to Spain's advantageous situation in Brazil.

The problems posed by the simultaneous embrace of competition and the spirit of pan-Hispanic fraternity will have to be addressed by the Cervantes Institute. Through ELE classes or through teacher training courses, it will be able, for example, to influence students' decisions to travel either to Spain or to any other Spanish-speaking country, thus favoring the tourism industry of one or the other. It will also have to decide whether to incorporate in its curriculum and teaching materials topics related to socio-linguistic competence that critically approach and question the internal hierarchies operating within the Spanish-speaking world

(e.g. dialect A is better than dialect B, in this country they speak better than in that one, etc.). We already mentioned that Francisco Moreno found in Brazil a certain preference for Spain's varieties versus, for example, Argentinean ones. The Institute must decide what to do in view of such a situation. Will it look the other way and take advantage of Spain's competitive edge, or will it actively try to be a body of not merely language teachers but language educators by dismantling linguistic prejudice? Will it be honestly loyal to pan-Hispanic ideals or will it behave as a tough contender in this lucrative linguistic market?

One of the most dangerous erasures (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 38) in discussions of ELE and Spanish as an economic resource is the silence surrounding intralinguistic hierarchies. It is a fact that in certain contexts knowledge of Spanish is a valuable asset for those who possess it. However, we must not forget the unequal distribution of that resource. As long as there are sharp hierarchies that value certain regional or social varieties over others, as long as corrective mechanisms are not put in place, as long as the means are not provided for people to develop the most valued communicative skills, as long as the ELE curricula do not aim at linguistic democratization, we will continue to face the perpetuation of a value system and a *habitus* that benefits some over others in the exploitation of that unequally distributed resource that is the Spanish language (Bourdieu, 1991: 43–65).

SPANISH IN BRAZIL AND BRAZILIAN SOVEREIGNTY

If the Cervantes continues to grow and gain ground in the training of Spanish teachers in Brazil, it will also gain power to influence Brazil's linguistic ecology and to spread, from the classroom, linguistic ideologies. As Phillipson puts it: "Education is a vital site for social and linguistic reproduction, the inculcation of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, and therefore particularly central in processes of linguistic hierarchisation" (1997: 240).

Of course, no one in Brazil is required (yet) to study at the Cervantes, but let us keep in mind that Spanish institutions have lobbied the Brazilian Ministry of Education to accept the Advanced DELE as a valid qualification (together with a high school diploma and four college level courses in education) to become a Spanish teacher at the elementary and secondary levels. Opening this path means allowing a small but significant presence of a

foreign institution in Brazil's educational system, where knowledge and skills as well as social and cultural images of self and other are produced and reproduced. We do not believe this situation to be disconnected from the cultural and business bonds being built between Spain and Brazil. Such a scenario, in any event, illustrates the conditions under which language policy operates in the context of globalization: how a nation's government (in this case, Brazil's) may surrender a portion of its sovereignty in an attempt to speedily avail itself of valued international cultural capital (in this case, knowledge of Spanish).

NEOCOLONIAL POLICIES, CULTURAL PROPAGANDA, AND ERASURE

Finally, a few additional considerations on the simultaneity of Spain's linguistic and business projection:

I do not know if they are intimately related; what I do know as an unquestionable reality is that never before has Spain invested so much in Brazil and never before has the demand for Spanish been so great (Nieto Magro, 2001).

Ramón Casilda Béjar offered a more decided interpretation: "Iberoamerica is a natural area for the expansion of Spanish companies and institutions because the common language and cultural roots facilitate access to markets and clients." He confirmed once again an idea expressed a few years earlier by another important Spanish businessman, Jesús de Polanco, President of PRISA (the media conglomerate that owns, for example, *EL PAÍS* and the Grupo Editorial Santillana): "Iberoamerica is a legitimate business, economic, and political objective for Spaniards ... We are much less remote from Latin America than what anyone may think" (qtd. in *EL PAÍS*, 24 July 1995).

Still, in spite of Polanco's view, questions are raised at times regarding the nature and the legitimacy of Spain's presence in Latin America. Casilda Béjar referred to the possible reason behind those doubts: "transferring the property of important companies from national to foreign hands may be perceived as a process that undermines national sovereignty and that can be equated with a 'recolonization'." A participant in an internet forum (HISPANIA) framed the matter in the following terms:

The Brazil issue makes us think about the preponderance of business conceptions over cultural conceptions in the world; the fact that the latter should be preferred in our relations with Latin America; and still there are many enthusiasts who only

talk about money and “business horizons” with regard to relations with sister America ... Spain’s economic activity overseas looks like all others, like North America’s, like the old British empire, etc. We should be more critical of these *nouveau riche* (Telefónica and its gang) and those who cheer them from the media, we already know with what interests in mind (qtd. in Irala, 2004: 117).

Opinions such as this one make us wonder if the desire to build cultural bonds may be linked to the creation of a Spanish-Brazilian fraternity that would naturalize the presence of Spaniards in Brazil and erase the neocolonial reading of their presence in this market.

ENGLISH VERSUS SPANISH

In a way, the development and cultivation of a cultural affinity, the imagining (in the Andersonian sense) of a Hispano-Brazilian community (Anderson, 1983), is one of the cards being played by Spain’s transnational corporations against their toughest rivals: American corporations (and maybe in the not so distant future Chinese ones). The international promotion of English has also been linked to the economic, military, and political interests of the United Kingdom and the United States, as has been exposed by Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994), among others.¹⁴ Through their studies we can see how the spread of English has been presented as a “natural, neutral, and beneficial” phenomenon (to use Pennycook’s words) while at the same time it has been actively promoted by institutions closely linked to American and British political and economic powers. The privileged position that favors the spread of English (and which, according to Phillipson, follows an imperial order) has triggered reactions: first, in countries concerned with the deterioration of the national language as a result of English encroachment;¹⁵ and second, in communities where the survival of minority languages is under threat for the same reason. In both cases the spread of the great international language is read as the cause and consequence of the power and aggressiveness of Anglo-Saxon cultures (and economies).

¹⁴ Spolsky’s questioning of Phillipson’s excessive linguicism as a distraction from “the more critical problem of dealing with the social, economic, political and cultural causes and effects of globalization” (80) is worth noting.

¹⁵ These polemics were particularly intense in Brazil. For a fascinating approach to the controversy see Faraco (2001). For France’s approach see, for example, Spolsky (2004), especially chapters 5 and 6.

In this scenario Spanish plays a complex role: on one hand, as an international language, its defenders present it as a possible counterweight to the dominance of English and they affirm the need to create a loyalty to Spanish strong enough to resist the encroachment of English and everything this language represents; but on the other, they legitimize the status and spread of Spanish with predominantly utilitarian and economic arguments almost identical to those used in the promotion of English. And here lies precisely one of the main discursive traps faced by the defenders of Spanish: using the threat posed by English as an alibi to impose a loyalty to Spanish that (just like in the case of English) will serve the same economic and political interests and hinder the emergence of alternative linguistic cultures and policies better suited to negotiate inter and intralinguistic diversity.

These coincidences, which we barely touch upon here, underline the need to develop *critical* and *comparative* studies of policies promoting international languages. Maybe the incorporation of the comparative angle will help in the elaboration of a finer and more comprehensive theoretical model. Our agreement with these authors is ample: we resist the isolation of linguistics and applied linguistics from the social sciences since we consider languages and teaching to be facts and activities that emerge and function in a complex social reality; we insist on the *political* nature of language policy, and we therefore believe that its agents must account for the efficacy and efficiency of their efforts as well as for the ethical principles that inspire them; we are concerned with understanding the social roots and consequences of language promotion and with the careful analysis of who benefits and who may be hurt as a result of it.

But neither the identification of coincidences nor the common theoretical bases justify the unqualified transference of the concepts developed in the study of one situation to the study of another. Phillipson's theoretical construct, linguistic imperialism, is a good starting point to pursue the comparison. According to Phillipson, imperialism offers us an appropriate political and historical context, and the theories of imperialism an appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of the value and international prestige of English. In his study, he demonstrates that the goals of the British Council included cultural propaganda and support for the strategic and commercial interests of the United Kingdom, and that one of its main functions, during its development in the fifties, was to consolidate British influence within the Commonwealth and the Empire.

Broadly speaking, these objectives (language promotion, cultural propaganda, and business expansion) are also found in the study of the policies promoting the international status of Spanish. In fact, Spain's imperial past still emerges on occasion as a point of reference for the understanding of today's business expansion ("Spanish Conquers Brazil"), and neocolonial rhetoric still colors the language of some policy agents:

One century after Spain's definitive withdrawal after losing Cuba, we return to a continent that is in no way alien to us: Ibero America. Now with other ideas, perspectives, and hopes provided to us by the new weapons: Spanish corporations, which have spread with the new winds of globalization ... note that the extraordinary position reached in this continent has been made possible by our extraordinary ally: the language, cause and effect of our emotional, psychological, and cultural affinity (Casilda Béjar, 2001).

We definitely do not discard potentially illuminating concepts developed by Phillipson (linguicism, linguistic imperialism, center-periphery relations, exploitation) for the historical analysis of the policies that promote Spanish. However, we believe that an excessive linguicism (Spolsky, 2004: 80) or the uncritical transfer of the concept of linguistic imperialism – without the qualification that Phillipson (1997) himself demands – would force the theory and partially distort what we believe to be the complex nature of Spain's contemporary language policies. It is true that the relationship between Spain and Latin America is still mediated by the imperial imagery and by structures of economic inequality that have their roots in colonial times. But considering what we have encountered in our study we believe that a better understanding of these policies will be reached by establishing a dialogue with phenomena such as the accumulation of power by transnational corporations, the power of national states vis-à-vis international capital, the new and old mechanisms of the construction of ethnic, national and transnational identities, and, most fundamentally, the commodification of culture (Heller, 1999a, b).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Leonor Acuña, Laura Callahan, Carlos Alberto Faraco, and Miguel Martínez, as well as *Language Policy's* anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments to a draft version of the article.

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