Re-scaling mixed language in a Paraguayan school: Toward more heteroglossic language policy

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Language policy (LP) occurs in contact zones, where linguistic diversity inspires desires for its management; and LP activity is a contact zone itself, an intersection of different languages, of shifting norms of use, and of unequal power relationships. It has been profitably understood as multilayered (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) from the supranational to national, community, institutional, and classroom and yet the nature of these layers and of connections between them remains a conceptual challenge. Describing these layers in terms of space, time, and power is important in explaining how and why language users take up various linguistic resources and not others. In line with research on language use in the contact zones of globalization (Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013; Collins, Slembrouck, & Baynham, 2009), recent research examining language policy (Collins, 2012; Hult, 2010) uses the concept of spatiotemporal scales to better understand these spatial, temporal, and power dimensions. This paper is part of an ethnographic study of Guarani/Spanish bilingual education policy implementation in Paraguay using scales to analyze how sociolinguistic resources were mobilized in two schools. Data sources include participant observation, interviews, video recorded classroom interaction, and documents. In general, while Guarani, the minoritized language, had successfully entered normative academic language use, its use in school benefitted Spanish-dominant students more than Guarani-dominant students. In this paper the analysis focuses on one exceptional event at the rural school where Guarani-dominant students and teachers temporarily disrupted the usual orders of indexicality (Blommaert 2010) in a public performance of local knowledge and identity using a mixed variety of Spanish/Guarani. I argue that a scalar perspective and the concomitant move toward more heteroglossic conceptions of language use advocated by Blommaert (2010) and Canagarajah (2013) are important in understanding how educational language policy can better support educational equity.

Keywords: language policy, scales.