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Introduction: Indigenous language regimes in the Americas

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1 Introduction

The Americas are a multilingual, pluricultural, and multiethnic territory where asymmetrical relationships of political, economic, sociocultural, and linguistic power have existed for centuries despite all the efforts that have been made to alleviate these situations. Language regimes constitute a set of regulations that prescribe which languages should be used when, where, how, by whom, and under what circumstances. According to Kroskrity (2000a: 3), “‘Regimes of language,’ as both image and title, [...] promised to integrate two often segregated domains: politics (without language) and language (without politics)”. This means that language regimes are political constructs, where ideologies function as linguistic and discursive practices. (For more information about language regimes and language ideologies, see Cardinal and Sontag 2016; Gazzola 2014; Gustafson 2009; Howard 2007; Kroskrity 2000a; Kroskrity and Field 2010; Kroskrity et al. 1992; Liu 2015; Schieffelin et al. 1998).

Language regimes are fluid and constantly changing across time and space, and they are also multidimensional. They can reveal palpable and ongoing power relationships and hierarchies at different levels—horizontal, vertical, local, and global. Unraveling this ethnographic complexity is a major task of the scholars who employ this heuristic paradigm in their work, a task that is often accompanied by policy interventions, whether from the scholars themselves or the people they work with.

As already noted, language regimes vary widely depending on their social, cultural, and political milieus. As such, Indigenous languages are preserved, promoted, studied, standardized, purified, intellectualized, and revitalized by different means and social agents from top-down, bottom-up, micro, macro, local, and global perspectives. This Special Issue on language regimes in the Americas presents original ethnographic research exploring a number of specifically Indigenous language regimes from a variety of these perspectives and

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ethnographic angles. The contributors to the present volume are experts from a variety of interdisciplinary research backgrounds.

This Special Issue also explores Indigenous language regimes in the Americas in terms of ideology, identity, policy, politics, and power. These involve multiple arenas in which linguistic actors struggle to constitute complex social spaces of negotiation, conflict, and transformation of language regimes across time and space. Language regimes in the Americas are taking different forms according to their numerous contexts and perspectives, and consequently, Indigenous language regimes have not been sufficiently explored. The goal of this volume is to help fill that void.

According to Kroskrity (2000b), “regimes of language” entail both politics and language. This means that the political and economic transformations in the last fifteen to twenty years throughout the Americas have produced fertile ground on which the so-called “old language regimes” have been challenged robustly, while others have been created anew.

2 Scope of the present issue

This issue, which contains five research articles and two book reviews, is most relevant to researchers and graduate students in the areas of linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, field linguistics, and educational linguistics. Conclusions drawn in the articles will also be relevant to educators, policy makers, language planning agencies, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and Indigenous organizations.

The leading article, titled “Indigenous Tewa language regimes across time: persistence and transformation”, was written by Paul V. Kroskrity. This article reveals regimes of language (which take into account social actors and their agencies) within the Village of Tewa, in northeastern Arizona, by focusing on the historical dialectic between sociocultural practices on the one hand, and language ideologies on the other. Kroskrity argues that linguistic purism should not be viewed as a “local naturalization of a dominant order”, but a historically contingent and agentive process. For instance, linguistic purism among the Tewa predates colonial regimes. He links theoretically Indigenous language regimes with Indigenous agencies, locating Indigenous language regimes in local notions of power, authority, and hierarchy. His purpose is to attempt to “trace and understand the historical development and transformation” of the Tewa’s language regimes over time. He does so by examining the interplay between their social institutions and cultural practices, following their linguistic practices and language ideologies from precolonial times through the present,

and noting the impact of external influences such as their “inclusion in the federally recognized Hopi Tribe and [...] the hegemony of the larger nation-state” (Kroskrity, this issue). He notes the important role played by theocratic institutions and the Tewa’s particular form of social organization (e.g., clans and moieties) in the production and elaboration of ideologies, which contributed significantly to Tewa linguistic resistance to Spanish colonization.

The second article, authored by Bret Gustafson titled “Oppressed no more? Indigenous language regimentation in plurinational Bolivia”, exemplifies “language regimentation” as a historical and political process of societal and institutional (re)orderings, structurings, and reconfigurations of language valuation and policies. He claims that language regimentation is a dialectical process—a similar view to Kroskrity’s. He focuses on disjunctures at the governmental level, a focus on official Indigenous language regimentation processes, which is really between non-state networks (activists, officials, politicians) and government institutions. He argues that language regimentation efforts are processual and contingent, reproducing new emergent language regimes or linguistic markets and political economies of language. He focuses on “hegemonic disjunctures” (paradoxes, tensions) emerging from the historical articulations between state entities across time periods. He analyzes how competently different social actors (aka “linguistic networks”) intervene in the metadiscourse of language rights (i.e., language revitalization) in the present-day era of decolonization. He calls for a processual understanding of language regimes—i.e., regimentation—instead of many language regimes; it is the process he is after. He traces the history of Indigenous language regimentation in Bolivia through historical legal documents and then brings it up to date by following contemporary transformations. He notes that official language policy at the state level “is often fragmented and improvisational”, which has created openings for “non-state linguistic activist networks [to take] an increasingly significant role in shaping state policy” (Gustafson, this issue). He examines incipient paradigm shifts at the state level during the tenure of Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first Indigenous president, but notes that “[i]t remains to be seen whether the new state position will lay the groundwork for robust language revitalization at the level of Indigenous language communities” (Gustafson, this issue).

The third article, “On language regimes in the Americas: Mexicano illustrations” by José Antonio Flores Farfán, looks at academic language regimes. He focuses on grammatical regimes of language, comparing speakers’ usages to linguists’ grammatical descriptions, which essentially amount to regimes of standardization and prescriptivism, although he does not name them as such. He addresses a number of what he calls heteroglossic expressions of language regimes through a discussion of several sociolinguistic issues surrounding the

use of Mexicano, or Nahuatl, which is probably the most widely spoken of the Indigenous languages of Mexico. His discussion is wide-ranging, covering political, ideological, and pragmatic aspects of language use, including Mexicano political economies with respect to “the politics of representation of Mexicano verbal culture” in different spheres where language plays a significant role. He takes a comparative approach to the various linguistic politics of interpretation among researchers from different fields (e.g., anthropology, sociolinguistics), encompassing “political, ideological and pragmatic uses and ideologies, in both historical and contemporary domains, including the written and oral worlds” (Flores Farfán, this issue).

The fourth article, “Changing livelihoods and language repertoires: hunting, fishing and gold mining in the Southeast Peruvian Amazon” by Sheila Aikman, explores the notion of language repertoires as components of language regimes. As with the previous articles, she takes a historical view, examining the shifting language repertoires of the Arakmbut people of the southeast Peruvian Amazon over a 30-year period; where they primarily spoke Harakmbut 30 years ago, they now are Spanish-dominant. She is not focused so much on the “how” of the process, but rather on the significance of this shift with respect to “changing lifestyles, social relations, desirable affiliations, and the changing value Harakmbut and Spanish language resources have for them in furthering these relationships” (Aikman, this issue). She analyzes four representative scenarios from her long-term ethnographic research that show the changing livelihoods of the Arakmbut from hunting and fishing to gold mining, to reach an understanding of “what these changes mean in terms of their social, cultural and spiritual relationships with their territory”, (Aikman, this issue). It becomes clear that to be successful in this new milieu, it was economically and socially necessary for them to modify their communicative repertoires to maintain “access to resources for their health and stability as a community in an intense and fast moving social, economic and cultural landscape” (Aikman, this issue).

The fifth article, “Kib’eyal taq ch’ab’äl: Mayan language regimes in Guatemala” by Judith Maxwell, is an overview of “strong and explicit” language regimes and language ideologies among the Maya of Guatemala designed to maintain their languages over the course of their 500-year history of “colonial and neocolonial domination”, beginning in precolonial times and moving all the way through the present, including key moments in the country’s history. Her focus is on the tensions between national initiatives to promote the Mayan languages and “the neoliberal regime’s emphasis on economic advancement and social simplification” (Maxwell, this issue) as well as on contrasting national trends with more local, grassroots language

movements. In her conclusion, she summarizes all the historical and sociolinguistic documentation she broaches.

The common theme running throughout the papers is the richness of the historical and sociolinguistic transformations of Indigenous communities and regions. The various authors focus on the intersecting histories of practices and negotiations between different social actors, calling for a dialectal approach to the relationship between social actors' agencies and the contingencies that social institutions impinge on them. Although the authors come from different yet related disciplinary backgrounds, they mobilize their own perspectives to the study (analysis) of language regimes as ethnographically processual and historically contingent. Hence, they all deepen our knowledge of the agentive practices of Indigenous communities in their negotiations with social and linguistic institutions over time and across spaces.

This issue ends with two book reviews. The first one is by Mathew Bumbalough on the book *Language planning and policy in Native America: History, theory, and practice*, by Teresa L. McCarty. The second one is by Margaret Remstad Hook on the book *The education of indigenous citizens in Latin America*, edited by Regina Cortina.

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