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Oppressed no more? Indigenous language regimentation in plurinational Bolivia

DOI 10.1515/ijsl-2017-0012

Abstract: Indigenous language regimentation in Bolivia is traced through historical legal documents and contemporary transformations. While state language policy is often fragmented and improvisational, non-state linguistic activist networks have taken an increasingly significant role in shaping state policy. Under the government of Evo Morales, explicit state measures to preserve and develop Indigenous languages are discussed as incipient shifts toward a more decolonizing mode of language regimentation. It remains to be seen whether the new state position will lay the groundwork for robust language revitalization at the level of Indigenous language communities.

Keywords: language regimes, Bolivia, language ideology, Guaraní

1 Introduction

In 1973 the distinguished Bolivian-Catalan linguist-anthropologist Xavier Albó published “El futuro de los idiomas oprimidos en los Andes” [The future of the oppressed languages of the Andes], a seminal article linking linguistic and social inequality in Bolivia. Focusing on Aymara and Quechua, Albó described linguistic and political regimes shaped by *de jure* and *de facto* processes of language regimentation that racially and economically stigmatized and minoritized Indigenous languages and their speakers (Albó 1977 [1973]). In official realms, Indigenous languages were alternately excluded (from legislation, language rights, and schooling) or implicitly targeted for erasure (through Spanish-centric literacy projects). The languages of the majority Indigenous population suffered low prestige vis-à-vis the dominant Spanish, with attendant impacts of language shift, lexical loss, and internalized stigmatization of language use. Albó argued that this was not merely a problem of diglossia, but rather a political-economic problem of racial inequality and subjugation. In a (1977 [1973]) second edition, Albó concluded, as would many who followed, that “[e]l futuro de los idiomas oprimidos está relacionado con el futuro de los

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pueblos oprimidos [...] [que] no depende tanto de medidas lingüísticas o culturales, sino principalmente de medidas económicas y políticas” [the future of the oppressed languages is related to the future of the oppressed peoples (...) which depends not so much on linguistic or cultural measures but on economic and political measures] (Albó 1977 [1973]: 31).¹

Some twenty years later, in 1994, a national education reform launched under the mantra of interculturalism and bilingualism promised a new era of maintenance and development of Indigenous languages (Gustafson 2009). The abrupt turn to a multiculturalist policy unfolded during an era of neoliberal economic reforms that did little to address inequality, illustrating Albó’s mismatch between “linguistic and cultural measures” and “economic and political measures”. Nonetheless, the recognition of Indigenous languages as pedagogical tools was a response to changing political and social conditions and international processes, including a rising Indigenous movement and a turn toward Indigenous rights. The assimilationist language regime began to fissure, as changes filtered into everyday ways of talking about Indigenous linguistic and cultural difference. Even so, while Indigenous movements and their allies worked to implement linguistic transformation, especially through bilingual schooling, the state commitment to language rights was weak, overshadowed as it was by the economic and political impacts of neoliberal reforms. By the early 2000s, public opposition to the neoliberal regime galvanized an alliance of leftist, Indigenous, and nationalist movements. The elite party apparatus collapsed in 2003. Multiculturalism had been touted as a legitimating discourse for an elite-controlled project, but in hindsight it appeared, as Albó said of progressive-sounding rhetoric in the 1970s, a “distractive crumb” (*migaja distractiva*).

In 2005 the Movement to Socialism (MAS) took the reins with the electoral victory of Evo Morales, an Aymara Bolivian. Forty years after Albó’s article, an Aymara was elected president on a platform of decolonization and the deepening of Indigenous rights. The first years of government were occupied with consolidating a new political, economic, and legal regime against rightist opposition. Morales’s second term saw the spread of state-sponsored language revitalization activities, institutions, materials, and new education legislation. Does this mean that Indigenous languages in Bolivia may be “oppressed” no more? This article considers this question by examining historical and contemporary shifts in Indigenous language regimentation.

¹ This and all other translations by the author.

2 Language regimentation

By language regimentation I refer to the making and remaking of official positions on language status, ideology, and use in public life. Language regimentation involves the (re)ordering of legitimacy conferred on citizens marked by linguistic differentiation, and implicates the potential transformation of the state itself, as the arbiter of sovereign ways of knowing and speaking (Kroskrity 1999). As such, the study of language regimentation as historical and political process offers a window onto state and society transformations, which may or may not be reflected in actual linguistic practice in speakers' communities (Gustafson 2009; Johnson and Ricento 2013). Language regimentation appears to emanate from the state to transform (whether positively or negatively) the ideological valuation, social status, and use of Indigenous languages. Yet language regimentation in Bolivia unfolds through tactical political negotiations and conjunctures generally shaped by the efforts of social actors operating in the web of institutions – legal, media, education, academic – that entangle the state and linguistic communities. Consideration of language regimentation requires tracing these changing spaces of social and political conjuncture and ideological transformation. Scholars have also focused on how language regimes are worked on and reshaped in specific ideological sites like laws, courts, media, or schools (Silverstein 1998). Ideological sites like legal texts and public metadiscursive practices and events “shape, both positively and negatively, processes of producing and receiving texts, affecting who is authorized to speak or write or to be listened to or read, and in what sort of social and institutional spaces” (Bauman and Briggs 1999: 142). Following Bauman and Briggs (1999), I ask how metadiscourse on (native) languages becomes central (or not) to these political reorderings.

Research on these questions in Bolivia has focused largely on the period of multi- or intercultural reformism of the 1990s. Various scholars have examined the colonial origins of official language ideologies in Bolivia and the slow transformation of these ideologies tied to efforts to implement bilingual intercultural education (Gustafson 2009; Howard 2009; López 2005). Normatively, for critical language planners and Indigenous rights proponents, this was and is a moment of apparent broadening of space for “ideological and institutional” supports for Indigenous language revitalization (see Hornberger 2009: 199). Official talk about decolonization, for instance, appears to be “developing the structural conditions necessary for previously marginalized voices to be heard” (Howard 2010: 176). I share this critical perspective and normative optimism. However, there is also a more familiar political ambivalence and disjuncture in

language regimentation practices, tied, I argue, to two contradictions: first, between the ideological flexibility of metadiscourse about Indigenous languages and the durability of the colonial state form, and second, between the decolonizing urge to “indigenize” the state and political efforts to defuse racial polarization that tend to domesticate demands for Indigenous self-determination. My contribution here seeks to document changes in government policy and highlight ongoing challenges created by these disjunctures.

In what follows, I examine key ideological sites and metadiscursive events, seen through the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary political moments. First, I trace language regimentation from the period of the 1952 Revolution through the military dictatorship era (1952–1982), the era of neoliberal multiculturalism (1982–2000s), and the contemporary moment of decolonization and plurinationalism (2005–present). I focus on ideological sites (constitutions, laws, and decrees) in relation to particular social and political conjunctures. This historical juxtaposition reveals the often arbitrary and improvisational character of *de jure* Indigenous language regimentation strategies. State elites, often with little coherence and uncertain commitment, often respond to processes they cannot entirely control, even as *de facto* social and political realities continue to reassert a colonialist language regime. Through fits and starts, we see the increasing visibilization and recognition of language difference confront a state form built around the erasure of these very differences. Second, I juxtapose political scenes from the contemporary moment of Evo Morales and the MAS party. These include legislative shifts of the current moment – the (2009) Constitution, a (2010) Education Law, and a (2012) Law on Linguistic Rights and Policies. I complement this analysis with consideration of rituals of implementation tied to the recent creation of Indigenous Language and Culture Institutes (*Institutos de Lengua y Cultura*) for every Indigenous “nation”, as they are now increasingly called. Insights from Guaraní actors associated with one of these institutes reveal emergent social dynamics associated with this new linguistic scenario. I argue that new processes of Indigenous language regimentation combine older forms of containment with incipient ideological ruptures in a stubbornly durable colonial state form. Seen against the backdrop of a longer history, the official discourse on Indigenous language regimentation has certainly changed. This entails more normatively positive valuation and institutional authority proffered on Indigenous languages by the state, and ambivalent, often reactionary rejection from non-speakers. Nonetheless, these shifts also entail the emergence of a new social formation, a system of bureaucratic accreditation processes, and a nascent economic market, as the language activist networks of prior eras congeal into something like a professional linguistic class. This socio-economic and bureaucratic formation, with ambiguous

implications for Indigenous language revitalization and use in daily life, is now bolstered by official support. While social and economic conditions for many rural Indigenous communities have yet to be radically transformed, this largely urban and now official space may provide an anchor for future substantive changes in the deeper colonialist history of language regimentation in Bolivia. Yet as with other engagements between language communities and official language regimentation processes, there is an equal possibility that state bureaucratization and marketization have little or negative impact on actual language use in daily life.

3 Historical overview: from active invisibilization to multicultural disjuncture

The Bolivian revolution of 1952 marked a rupture with the country's feudal agrarian past (Malloy 1970). For over a century prior, Indigenous languages were not only invisible, at least explicitly, in the legal apparatus of state rule, Indigenous-language speakers were legally subject to feudal labor regimes, territorial dispossession, and exclusion from citizenship. The (1952) revolutionary regime oversaw land reform, the expansion of schooling, and the rise of corporatist-style governance. Indigenous peoples were no longer to be called Indians (*indios*), but would be legally incorporated as an organized peasantry (*campesinos*). Though often spoken of as pursuing the liberation of the Indigenous population, the new regime sought to erase the condition of indigeneity itself. Nonetheless, the underlying racist ideology that structures state power in Bolivia survived largely unchanged. *Campesino* became a euphemism for *indio*. The new structures of inequality were institutionalized in a state built as a racial (and linguistic) pyramid, with whites and Spanish at the top and Indians and their languages at the bottom (Albó 1977 [1973]; Gustafson 2009).

3.1 The Republic and the dictatorship era

After 1952, and despite the revolution, the country remained under the constitution of 1947, which referred to Indigenous communities but not to their rights or languages (CPE 1947). Yet winds of intercontinental change were stirring with the rise of “Indigenist” congresses that debated how best to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Both Catholic religious institutions and Protestant missionaries were making forays into Indigenous languages – the

former for more socially critical education within the paradigm of liberation theology and the latter aimed at more conservative evangelization. Thus, despite invisibilization in law, small fissures began to appear. In 1954 the President, likely for political convenience rather than political commitment, decreed the officialization of one Aymara alphabet (Decreto Supremo 1954). The decree implicitly acknowledged that pedagogical instrumentation of Indigenous languages might be necessary, but did not reflect a deep ideological shift in the state. Indeed, as a proposal the decree came not from the state, but as a response to the hemispheric Interamerican Indigenist Congress that was held that year in La Paz. This, like many state actions to come, was politically shallow, a mere orthographic gesture (see Table 1). The approved orthography followed the phoneticist and assimilationist modality then current in the indigenist (and missionary) approach. It was accompanied by no significant state institutional transformation. Only two weeks prior, the government signed an agreement with the linguist-missionaries of the Wycliffe Bible Translators /Summer Institute of Linguistics to take charge of linguistic work in the eastern lowlands where the state education apparatus was non-existent (Castro Mantilla 1997: 37–40). Thus, incipient language regimentation practices came to the state from elsewhere, illustrating the state’s institutional limits and internal contradictions, rather than its overarching power. The state authorized through gesture what it could not resist, that

Table 1: Timeline of Bolivian legislation on Indigenous languages.

1950s–1982: republic/dictatorship era		
1954	decree	orthographic gesture
1955	law	Education Law, Art. 115: Assimilation
1967	constitution	legal invisibilization
1968	decree	orthographic gesture
1982–1994: neoliberal structural adjustment – no explicit measures		
1994–2005: neoliberal “second wave” multiculturalism		
1994	law	Law 1565: education reform, bilingual intercultural for native speakers
1994	constitution	limited recognition of “pluriethnic” state
2000	decree	officialization gesture
2005–present: decolonization and plurinationalism		
2008	decree	creation of Indigenous Universities
2009	constitution	plurinational state, proliferation of new legal categories
2010	law	Law 70: Education Law, plurilingual, inter/intracultural for all Bolivians
2012	law	Law 269: General Law on Linguistic Rights and Policies
2012	decree	creation of language and culture institutes

which elites would prefer not to deal with at all. As an emergent language regime, this entailed internal contradiction – between invisibilization, and reluctant recognition aimed at assimilation. Beyond these linguistic gestures, elites tried to maintain a hegemonic regime rooted in racialist understandings of difference and a monoglot national project. This was enshrined in Article 115 of the 1955 Code of Education (see Table 1). The speakers of “vernacular languages” (*lenguas vernáculas*) were to be made literate, and made to speak Spanish. Languages used to this end would be codified with alphabets as similar to Spanish as possible. Thus native languages were “vehículo para el inmediato aprendizaje del castellano, como factor necesario de integración nacional” [vehicles for the immediate learning of Spanish for national linguistic integration] (Código de la Educación Boliviana 1955, Art. 115).

Over the next decades, the legal invisibilization of Indigenous languages deepened. In the (1967) constitution, as the country entered nearly two decades of military rule, the words for ‘language’, such as *idioma*, *lengua*, or *lenguas*, do not appear. All references to the category *indígena* (Indigenous) were erased. At a subnational scale, there were, nonetheless, emergent shifts tied to new kinds of actors, as language regimentation efforts again emerged from elsewhere. While missionary work expanded in one direction, in 1965 the linguist M. J. Hardmann, a Fulbright scholar from the University of Florida, along with Aymara scholar Juan de Díos Yapita, helped create an externally funded national institute of linguistics within the Ministry of Education (INEL, *Instituto Nacional de Estudios Lingüísticos*) (Yapita 1988). This planted a seed for the training of Aymara linguists and the incipient emergence of secular academic linguists as a political and intellectual field. In response to the rising public significance of Indigenous languages, particularly of Aymara, the social and political population of most immediate concern to the La Paz-centric regime of state power, General René Barrientos, then President, also found himself emitting his own orthographic gesture in 1968 (Decreto Supremo 1968). The decree recognized another Aymara alphabet that had been debated in a public roundtable. Again, the state acquiesced in order to claim sovereignty over a domain which it had long sought to erase. Yapita had by then created the first Aymara orthography made by an Aymara speaker, but the alphabet approved by this decree reasserted the assimilationist orthographic politics of the North American missionary organization, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) (Yapita 1988). The decree recognized the “condición multilingüe” [multilingual condition] of Bolivia, yet represented this condition, something like a malady to be cured, as a temporary negative state. Native languages were “barreras lingüísticas” [linguistic barriers] that impeded “campesinos” [peasants] from accessing the “proceso de desarrollo” [process of development]. The alphabet was to make the “tránsito al español” [transition to

Spanish] more efficient. A spate of generals and colonels, starting with the President himself, set their hands to the document.

Yet even within the authoritarian state, the nucleus of what I am calling the social formation of “linguistic activist networks” – today something like a professional class in sociological terms – was growing from within and beyond the state. As political regime, intra-elite disputes over power led to the rise of the intensely conservative military dictatorships, including the years of General Hugo Bánzer (1971–1978), a figure who we will see more of in just a bit. Yet from below, with the assistance of outside institutions like the University of Florida, in 1972 Yapita and other Aymara scholars created the first (private) Institute of Aymara Language and Culture (ILCA, *Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Aymara*). Talk about language, from beyond the state, was a way to talk about inequality, however indirectly. It was in this context, on the occasion of the first National Language Congress in 1973 that Albó penned *idiomas oprimidos* (Albó 1977 [1973]: 30). Other scholars, many Indigenous (and primarily Aymara), were also producing sociolinguistic analyses and critiques (Yapita 1977). As Albó (Albó 1977 [1973]: 30–31) noted, the rise of these grassroots efforts met with top-down refusal. For example, the military regime, perhaps unsurprisingly, preferred to take the money and tutelage of the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) for development-oriented bilingual literacy interventions rather than to cultivate local language vitality efforts.

With the end of military rule in 1982, elite party politics returned as the mechanism for sharing governmental power among a tightly controlled and exclusionary white political class. The situation of racial and political exclusion of the majorities was largely unchanged. This set the stage for the era of neoliberal (free-market) economic reforms known as structural adjustment. Between 1985 and 1994 this entailed privatization of state owned firms, labor flexibilization, and the opening of access to natural resource exploitation by foreign investors. Again from below, the period saw local and substate efforts to modify *de facto* language policy and practice. In 1983 a national literacy project backed by factions of progressive educators in the state apparatus sought to incorporate Aymara into a socially conscious literacy campaign. This yielded a new wave of participants in the linguistic class, including many Indigenous schoolteachers, including some with experience as Bible translators for the SIL, who would go on to support a UNICEF effort to create experimental bilingual education projects in 1989. The late 1980s saw the definitive sedimentation of this social formation and these language activist networks – Indigenous, criollo Bolivian, and foreign – who would continue working in the coming decades. I have discussed the internal ideological contours of this process elsewhere (Gustafson 2009).

3.2 Neoliberal multiculturalism

The neoliberal turn showed how explicit language regimentation was a low priority for elites. Only after a decade of economic and political restructuring would the elite parties even consider experimenting with the discourse of multiculturalism and bilingual education. The grassroots linguistic networks continued to grow, and again, the official turn to Indigenous languages relied heavily on money coming from elsewhere. Bilingual intercultural education initiatives, in particular, relied primarily on European donors with reluctant acquiescence of the World Bank. Fully twenty-five years after the last official language gesture, the government recognized cultural difference in the 1994 constitution and launched the implementation of bilingual education in the 1994 Education Reform Law (CPE 1994). The 1994 constitution incorporated the word “pluriethnic” (*pluriétnico*) to describe the state and the word *indígena* returned as a legal category of citizen rights and state obligations. To be sure, the shift was timid. Only three uses of *indígena* appear, all in Article 171, on Indigenous rights. Article 171 acknowledges a diluted set of Indigenous “social, economic, and cultural” – not political – rights. Language difference merits only one mention, in assuring rights to translation in courts of law. There is no recognition of peoples (*pueblos*) or territories (*territorios*). Pluriethnicity was invoked only in a preliminary article, with no legal elaboration.² This was a reluctant multiculturalism at best, far from hegemonic within the elite ruling classes of the time.

Nonetheless, the (1994) Education Reform Law made significant statements about language maintenance, development, and bilingual schooling. By incorporating the efforts of the linguistic activist networks as law, the reform made significant strides toward corpus and status planning (Gustafson 2009; López 2005). Yet disjunctures were clear. Supporters of bilingual education were marginalized within the realms of state power. The process was largely dependent on foreign support. Against this opposition and amidst ambivalence, new language regimentation practices, like the writing of Indigenous language schoolbooks and their use in classrooms, struggled to chip away at a stubborn monoglot nation-state project. The bilingual education project, largely with UNICEF support, intensified secular language activities, material production, and personnel training. Teacher training institutes were created with mandates to use Indigenous languages in the classroom and experiment with a poorly defined “intercultural” pedagogy. Educational councils (CEPOs, *Consejos Educativos de los Pueblos Originarios*) were established as links between

² Ethnic (*étnico*) and ethnies (*étnias*) were short-lived categories of the neoliberal multiculturalist era.

Indigenous political organizations and the Ministry of Education. State-sponsored institutes of language and culture that would promote and cultivate Indigenous languages were slated for creation.

The rupture with the explicit assimilationist regimes of the past appeared to be growing. Yet there was little to suggest the consolidation of any singular ideological regime for Indigenous languages. Neoliberal elites, the wider population, and parents of Indigenous children were all ambivalent, for different reasons, about the pedagogical uses of Indigenous languages. The extra-state linguistic networks wielded their own set of increasingly consolidated discourses – largely revitalizationist – on Indigenous languages. This metadiscursive flexibility was able to accommodate stances that ranged from Indigenous militancy to World Bank-style social development. In fits and starts, from above, outside, and below, a new polysemic language regime emerged within and around the peripheries of the state.

The last linguistic policy gesture of the neoliberal era came in the year 2000. President Bánzer, the former dictator reelected as president in 1989, signed a decree officializing Indigenous languages (Decreto Supremo 2000). Against the backdrop of the bilingual education project and Bánzer's own identity as a far-right representative of the racist eastern Bolivian elite, the move seemed remarkable. Yet it was an empty and desperate gesture, perhaps like that of General Barrientos in years past. The neoliberal experiment was coming unraveled. In April of that year, widespread citizen anger over a plan to privatize water in one of the largest cities led to state repression, mass mobilization, and eventually – government retreat. In September of 2000, as the president and his cabinet signed the decree officializing all thirty-six Indigenous languages, Indigenous and popular resistance erupted around La Paz in what would come to be known as Bloody September. Ten days after the officialization gesture, Bánzer unleashed the army on civilians, most of them Aymara. Politicians and editorialists opined in papers that “Indians” (*indios*) were savages whose “tongues” (*lenguas*) were unfit for modern democracy (Gustafson 2002). Superficial though it was, government support for bilingual education began to disappear. The disjuncture between seemingly positive Indigenous-language regimentation processes and political-economic and social realities had become a chasm.

Recognizing these hegemonic disjunctures – and understanding the ways that language regimentation efforts were as much acquiesced to, as actively pursued by, different state regimes – allows for a less rigid understanding of the connection between hegemonic ideologies and processes of language regimentation. This suggests that we should pay attention to language regimes as processual and contingent articulations between non-state networks and institutions of the state that they seek to capture and change policy, rather than as

reflections of state power or anything approaching official language ideology. This is especially true in postcolonial states like Bolivia where the exercise of state power, whether through coercion or consent, is far from seamless. Exclusion of Indigenous languages was as much a *de facto* result of the state's lack of institutional capacity and the deeper colonial core of racist rule, as it was the result of any active or *de jure* interventions, many of which were gestural and most of which were weakly implemented.

4 Ideological sites and metadiscursive practice in the era of decolonization

The neoliberal power structure rooted in traditional parties controlled by the lighter-skinned elites, entered into crisis in 2000 and collapsed in 2003. The 2005 election of Evo Morales ushered in an era of renewed discourse, both informal and official, on Indigenous languages. Yet against expectations of the linguistic activist networks, consolidation of power and negotiations with long-standing opponents of Indigenous language rights, like the organized teachers, would stall robust action. The first few years of the Morales government were shaped by efforts to counter violent right-wing opposition and to consolidate the nationalist, state-led economic turn (Gustafson 2006). After an ambitious (and conflictive) constitutional overhaul in 2009, the MAS regime finally moved forward with a new education law in 2010 (Ley 070) and eventually, seven years after coming to power, the language rights legislation known as Ley 269. These documents marked a deepening of the rupture with the assimilationist past, and bear some discussion.

Indeed, if language (*lengua* or *idioma*) was absent in the 1967 constitution and its predecessors, “languages” (*idiomas*, *lenguas*) in the plural form, with thirteen mentions, took on an array of new meanings as descriptor of rights, state obligations, community identities, and geographic territories in the 2009 Constitution. The timid neoliberal legal nod toward a “multiethnic” and “pluricultural” nation was discarded in favor of a proliferation of references to Indigenous peoples and nations, cultural rights and obligations, language rights and responsibilities, and an official renaming of the Republic of Bolivia as the “Plurinational State of Bolivia” (*Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia*) (Table 2). The new constitution (Article 5) made every Indigenous language official, listing all thirty-six of them individually. This brought into a field of legal visibility as “nations and peoples” (*naciones y pueblos*) populations historically called tribes, communities, savages, and the like. Articles on Indigenous autonomy were also

Table 2: Key terms related to language regimentation in Bolivian Constitutions, 1967–2009.

	1967 Military dictatorship	1994 Neoliberal multiculturalism	2009 Plurinational state
<i>indígena</i> .	0	3	130
Indigenous			
<i>pueblos</i> peoples	0	1	67
<i>plurilingüe</i>	0	0	6
plurilingual			
<i>idioma/s</i>	1	1	10
language/s	citizenship without distinction of <i>idioma</i>	citizenship without distinction of <i>idioma</i>	rights to and obligations for use of 36 official Indigenous languages
<i>lengua</i>	0	1 right to translation in courts	0
language			
<i>lenguas</i>	0	1	3
languages		right to languages	use in universities and autonomous regions
cultura/l	11	11	72
	popular culture, national culture	popular culture, national culture	wide domain of state oversight and rights
inter/pluri-cultural	0	1	26

conjoined with the question of language, dismantling the singular association between nation and (Spanish) language. Various articles asserted rights to official use of the languages of their territories (*idiomas propios de sus territorios*). In these territories, the offices of the state should use two official languages (CPE 2009, Art. 5, II). All peoples have the right to belong to a “linguistic community” (*comunidad lingüística*) (CPE 2009, Art. 14).

These new legal inscriptions and the emergent language regimes they conjured for the future transposed much of the aspirational discourse and practice of linguistic activist networks into the legal structure of the state. These would take on further specification and institutional delimitation in the 2010 Education Law (Ley 070 2010) and the 2012 Law on Linguistic Rights and Policies (Ley 269 2012). Both elaborated on the institutionalization of language as an axis of citizen rights and a domain of state obligations. This extended some of the efforts of the neoliberal era, yet was reframed within new ideological and discursive articulations. The new state, generating conditions for its own hegemonic disjunctures, sought to institutionalize an unwieldy convergence between a highly centralized, state-led nationalist development model and the pluralization of multiple modalities for claiming rights to difference.

By and large the new Education Law promised to further institutionalize bilingual education, despite continuing opposition from teachers who spoke only Spanish or whose own ideological orientations, largely Trotskyite, collided with the proIndigenous discourse of decolonization. The Education Law also called for the creation of Institutes of Language and Culture for every Indigenous “nation” or “people”. These would work toward “la normalización, investigación, y desarrollo de sus lenguas y culturas, los mismos que serán financiados por las entidades territoriales autónomas” [the standardization, investigation, and development of their languages and cultures, which will be financed and sustained by their autonomous territorial entities] (Ley 070, Art. 88). These institutes were brought into existence with a presidential decree in 2012 (Decreto Supremo 2012). This allowed for the visible manifestation of language regimentation in a very material way – with the creation of an institution, a physical space through which a set of social actors can carry out a series of practices legitimated by law. Alongside the educational councils (CEPOs) created during the neoliberal period, this now gave state institutional form and employment to a new cadre of members of the Indigenous linguistic class. The growing social formation, which I also refer to as linguistic networks, found an expanded position within the labyrinthine world of state bureaucracies, budgets, and payrolls. This was a victory for some, and an empty populist gesture to others.

In 2012 the Congress also passed into law another longstanding demand of the linguistic networks, the Law on Linguistic Rights and Policies (Ley 269). Similar laws are either on the books or under debate in other Latin American countries, and are seen as a necessary legal foundation for the deepening of rights-based language regimes that guarantee the possibility of equal public space and support for Indigenous languages under the law. The law outlines an array of public spaces (courts, education, public services, public officials, Indigenous territories, media) where Indigenous language use is to be made official and/or put into practice. Of most immediate public interest and commentary was the part of the law stipulating that in three years’ time (by August of 2015) all public servants and political representatives would have to speak the Indigenous language of their respective region, municipality or jurisdiction. I turn now to consider some of the metadiscursive events linked to the language law and the creation of the “Institutes of Language and Culture”.

The Language Rights Law was announced with relatively little fanfare at the MAS ruling party’s national meeting in August of 2012 (Alarcón 2012). Representatives of the largely Aymara and Quechua farmers’ union (CSUTCB) pledged their support for Evo Morales, as did representatives of urban

organizations, and the pro-government faction of the organization of Indigenous peoples of Eastern Bolivia (CIDOB). The political assembly was dominated by proclamations about upcoming elections that overshadowed the announcement of the new law. Most visible was a decree to do away with the so-called “Day of the Indian”, a racist residue of the recent past, and change it to the “Día de la Revolución Agraria, Productiva y Comunitaria” [day of the productive, communitarian, agrarian revolution]. This accompanied new regulations for the national land reform. As one item on a longer agenda, the Minister of Education was on hand to officially take charge of implementing the new Law of Language Rights (Ley 269). Language rights were thus rearticulated with the official discourse of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle, in much the same way – that is, a somewhat paradoxical and peripheral appendage – that they were embraced by education reform under the neoliberal multiculturalism of the past.

The implementation of the Law of Language Rights was accompanied by other performances associated with the creation of new Plurinational Institutes for the Study of Language and Culture (*IPELC, Institutos Plurinacionales para el Estudio de Lengua y Cultura*). Roughly following a trajectory of geopolitical significance, radiating outward and downward from the Aymara- and Quechua-centric politics of La Paz and the Andes to the languages of the eastern lowlands, the government set about staging grandiose public inaugurations of these new institutions over the following year. (At this writing, mid-2015, sixteen institutes have been inaugurated). These acts of institution-making were metadiscursive events, in which the state offered itself to language communities as an official space through which native language speakers and Indigenous “nations” would be able to pursue the struggle for decolonization by way of the study and promotion of language and culture. At one such event, President Morales celebrated the fact that finally, “después de 520 años también nosotros, los pueblos originarios, quechuas, aymaras y todas las naciones, pueblos indígenas del oriente boliviano, podemos decir ahora, frente a la Real Academia de la Lengua Española, que tenemos una Real Academia de Lenguas Nativas” [after 520 years, we the originary peoples, Quechuas, Aymaras, and all of the nations and peoples of eastern Bolivia (...) will have, in the face of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, (our own) Royal Academy of Native Languages] (MINEDU 2012, emphasis added). The use of *we* was not insignificant. It reflects an important distinction from the framing of multiculturalism during the neoliberal period, cast as it was as a kind of policy implemented *for* Indigenous peoples *by* the (non-Indigenous) state. In official language at least, this suggested a new political narrative in which languages are taken up as part of

cuestiona y rechaza el dominio, la hegemonía, la dogmatización y globalización socio-cultural y económica neoliberal; transforma la visión etnocéntrica, capitalista y occidental, en la perspectiva de contribuir a la transformación social, cultural, política y económica del Estado Plurinacional desterrando toda forma de colonización y neocolonización.

[(...) the questioning and rejection of the domination, the hegemony, and the sociocultural and economic neoliberal dogmatization and globalization (to) transform the western capitalist and ethnocentric vision (and to) contribute to the social, cultural, and political transformation of the Plurinational State, uprooting all forms of colonization and neocolonialism.]

(MINEDU 2012: 9)

All of this talk of decolonization, to be sure, had long been familiar within the linguistic networks but was now being voiced by the state itself.

In July and August of 2013, President Morales inaugurated the Aymara and Quechua institutes, the former in the historically significant Aymara city of Warisata, the latter in the largely Quechua-speaking region of Cochabamba. At the Quechua event, Morales again invoked a new form of recognition, speaking of the “Quechua and Aymara nations” as part of the national territory. Such framings were unheard of during the neoliberal period. The President linked language policy and planning with the struggle to “recuperar la forma de vivencia en colectividad, comunidad y armonía con la Madre Tierra, en solidaridad y complementariedad entre nosotros” [recover forms of living in collectivities, in community and harmony with Mother Earth, in solidarity and complementarity between us]. This idea of living well (*el buen vivir*), said to be reflective of Indigenous ontologies of ideal human–nature relations, is frequently put forth as the label for a new model of development and decolonization. Here again, languages were sutured to a broader critique of capitalism and imperialism, and to the Indigenous values of reciprocity and complementarity, rather than competition (ABI 2013; Tejada Levy 2014). Here again, there is a shift beyond talk *just* about language revitalization and maintenance toward a new framing that ties linguistic and epistemic alterity to a decolonial political project and the envisioning, however diffusely imagined, of alternatives to capitalist modernity (Patzí Paco 2013).

As one critic noted, these should not be read as actual claims to or performances of linguistic purity or authenticity. Morales himself, whose own language of choice is invariably Spanish, is, when speaking to other constituencies, as apt to encourage his supporters to learn to speak English as part of the anti-imperialist struggle (Tejada Levy 2014). Yet supporters of these new legislative turns, unlike the critics, see no contradiction here. Just as the new education law speaks of trilingual pedagogies (English, Spanish, and Indigenous languages), to suggest that there is a contradiction between

speaking English, Spanish, and a native language betrays a residual colonial understanding of the distinction between modern and nonmodern languages. There is, nonetheless, a more significant hegemonic disjuncture between decolonial talk and state practice. In August of 2012, while Morales was speaking of language rights and resistance to capitalism and imperialism tied to the new language and culture institutes, his government was also confronting Amazonian Indigenous opposition to a highway project cutting through Indigenous lands. The now infamous case of the TIPNIS highway, backed by Brazilian capital, generated mass protests of some Indigenous organizations, and at one point sparked a violent police response. Though somewhat more sophisticated than the shallow orthographic gestures of the past, these new state acts of language regimentation must be seen within wider political and economic conjunctures.

Electoral cycles are one such conjuncture. As the country geared up for presidential elections, the rituals of inauguration continued. In September of 2013, the Vice President of Bolivia, Alvaro García Linera, visited the city of Camiri to inaugurate the Juan Añemoñ Institute of Guaraní Language and Culture (*Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Guaraní 'Juan Añemoñ'*) (MINEDU 2013). García Linera, unlike Morales, is a “white” criollo Bolivian. A former guerrilla and erudite Marxist intellectual, he complements Morales’s affinity with the “popular” sectors of society with a coat-and-tie performance of the Bolivian intellectual left. While neither he nor Morales have ever been associated with what I am calling here the linguistic networks, he has become adept at performing the metadiscourse of language revitalization and associated decolonization. As captured in Facebook albums by the youth organization of the MAS, the event was as much a campaign moment as it was an institutional opening. A small plane landed on the dusty airstrip where the Vice President was met by the local party representatives. The party’s light blue and white flags, alongside the colorful checkerboard of the *wiphala*, representing Indigenous diversity, accompanied him from the airfield to the Guaraní organizational offices. These young party militants were not identified with the Indigenous Guaraní organization, so the visit required a kind of official multitasking that made of language revitalization a useful complement to political campaigning.

In the ceremonious style of public ritual, local dignitaries and Guaraní leaders spoke, as did García Linera, on a stage with a large banner proclaiming the founding of the Institute. Symbols of the Ministry of Education were emblazoned on the banner, alongside the logo of the Indigenous organization, the APG, its educational council, the CEPOG (Originary Peoples’ Education Council–Guaraní), and images of Guaraní women dressed in the traditional *mandu* dress.

The Minister of Education sat sweating in the heat with a Guaraní woven bag hanging around his neck. Light blue letters – MAS party colors – read in Guaraní:

ÑAMOMOEYE ÑANE RAMI RETA JAKUERE ÑAMOMIRATA JARE YAMBOKUAKUA VAERÄ
ÑANE ÑEE JARE YANDEREKO ÑANERETA GUASUPE [We are following in our grand-
parents' footsteps, we are strengthening and growing our language and our culture in
our country.]

On the surface, the event differed little from similar encounters between state officials and the Guaraní during the era of neoliberal multiculturalism (Gustafson 2009). Yet again, the discourse of decolonization certainly took on a more forceful tone than the often banal invocation of multiculturalism. García Linera moved between the immediate time of politics (upcoming elections pitting the MAS against the conservative opposition) and a longer history of decolonizing struggle. Like Morales, he sutured these political frames using metadiscourse on language as a mediating instrument. While neoliberalism, he said, had sought to make Indigenous languages “disappear”, the Plurinational State was moving to support Indigenous languages, to create a country in which citizens live “without discrimination” (*sin discriminación*) and to ensure the survival of Indigenous languages. We are here, he said, for the “reconocimiento, preservación y de garantía del idioma guaraní, para que sigamos hablando guaraní 5.000 años más para adelante, no va a desaparecer, lo vamos a fortalecer” [recognition, preservation and the *garantía* (...) of the Guaraní language, so that we continue speaking it in 5,000 years, it is not going to disappear, we are going to strengthen it] (Vicepresidencia 2013). Here the offer of juridical status (*garantía*, as in the securing of a constitutional right) was a way to offer status and legitimacy to Indigenous languages while also reasserting the sovereign authority of the state over them and the sovereign protection of their speakers. The Vice President continued:

Un idioma es una manera de vivir el mundo, es una manera de producir el mundo, es una manera de organizar el mundo; un idioma es mucha cosa, es universo y por eso los idiomas son tan importantes en la vida de los pueblos que cuando vinieron los conquistadores aparte de quitarles a nuestros hermanos sus tierras, esclavizarlos y aniquilarlos, les quitaban sus idiomas; les hacían olvidar sus idiomas para que cambien de mentalidad. [...] Ahora en este Estado Plurinacional no le negamos a nadie su identidad, más bien lo reconocemos; en eso estamos recién 7 años, intentando rescatar, intentando levantar lo que destrozaron en 500 años.

[A language is a way of living the world, of making the world, of organizing the world, a language is many things, it is a universe, and that is why languages are so important in the life of peoples. (That is why) when the conquerors came, besides taking their lands from

our brothers, enslaving and annihilating them, they took away their languages, they made them forget their languages, in order to change their mentality. (...) Now in the Plurinational State we do not deny anyone their identity, we recognize it. In this [effort] we are only now in the seventh year (since we came to office), trying to rescue, trying to raise up what was destroyed in 500 years.]

(Padilla 2013)

The discourses of preservation and antidiscrimination are problematic signs of support. Non-speakers may allow for the preservation of languages if they are seen as something from the past, confirming their colonial sense of Indigenous languages as premodern. Yet non-speakers may also be rankled by the notion of privileges being conferred on Indigenous language speakers or of onerous obligations being imposed on themselves. Indigenous language activists thus repeatedly find themselves asserting that the new language policies are about “modernizing” languages for the present and future, and that these policies benefit all Bolivians, who now should (or must) learn Indigenous languages. Thus, much as the discourse of multiculturalism allowed for the replication of cultural racism (between “us” the modern rulers and “you” the culture-laden others), the social reality of coloniality is not easily displaced by official talk of decolonization. For example, Pedro Apala, a long-time Aymara figure in the linguistic networks, and now the director of the Institutes at the national level, was also present. He added points crucial to the decolonizing turn, even with its inherent “modernizing” bent:

la misión central de este instituto es la de realizar investigaciones de carácter lingüístico y cultural para sobre esta base comenzar la verdadera revolución cultural que será el motor de la auténtica descolonización; la lengua Guaraní tiene que ser capaz de escribir obras de filosofía, alta matemática, obras de la literatura universal, pero también tiene que ser capaz de producir la propia ciencia, producto del pensamiento filosófico y científico de nuestros antepasados.

[The mission of this institute is to carry out linguistic and cultural research, so that on that foundation [we] begin the true cultural revolution that will be the engine of true decolonization. The Guaraní language must be able to write works of philosophy, high mathematics, works of universal literature, and its own science, the scientific and philosophical thinking of our ancestors.]

(Padilla 2013)

Talk about preservation, antidiscrimination, and modernization were thus complementary to the articulation of Indigenous language revitalization with a decolonizing agenda.

Yet the fusion of these publicly palatable ideas of antidiscrimination and preservation with the political discourse of decolonization created its own discursive dilemmas when speaking about national identities. Morales, García Linera, and the MAS have discarded neoliberal “multiculturalism” as a way of trying to address multiplicity within national unity. Morales, as noted above, at least in some contexts, unabashedly speaks of the decolonizing “we” but easily switches to *bolivianos* when a more generic label is needed. García Linera, lighter-skinned than most Bolivians, alternates, frequently working his way through what is a rather muddling story of “who we are” that seeks to open space for official linguistic gestures without alienating others. On this occasion, lest those in the crowd not be interpellated by the support of Guarani, their language, and the critique of coloniality, García Linera reminded the audience that in Bolivia:

“Poco a poco estamos indianizándonos. Todos somos bolivianos, pero hay unos bolivianos que son bolivianos y guaraníes, yo no, yo soy boliviano, pero mi hermano Faustino es boliviano y es a la vez guaraní ... La casa grande es Bolivia que nos protegé a todos, dentro están los hermanos aymaras, guaraníes, chiquitanos [...] todos somos mestizos pero uno no va al extranjero y no dice ‘soy mestizo,’ dice: Soy boliviano.

[(W)e are little by little Indianizing ourselves (*indianizándonos*) (...) we are all Bolivians, but some Bolivians are Bolivians and Guarani – not me, I am Bolivian, but my (figurative) brother Faustino (the Guarani leader seated beside him) is Bolivian, but at the same time, he is Guarani. The large house that is Bolivia protects all of us, and in it are Aymara, Guarani, Chiquitano brothers. (...) We are all *mestizos*, but if someone goes abroad, he or she does not say, “I’m mestizo”, they say, “I’m Bolivian”.]”

(Vicepresidencia 2013)

Though beyond the space of the present article, these seemingly incompatible formulations – we are all *mestizos*, Indians, Guarani, and Bolivians – merit further exploration, since they represent an emergent modification of the multiculturalism talk of the recent past. Local non-Indian leaders forced to recognize indigeneity during the 1990s also often stumbled through attempts to articulate what they meant by multiculturalism. Yet against the appearance of incoherence, the Vice President was working through a new formulation of a composite national identity. This combines a legal national-state identity with national-cultural identities, amid a process of “Indianization” of the state through juridical transformation (see García Linera 2014). This suggested that Bolivians were composite bearers of rights. In word, if not deed, this displaced the more traditional model of subject transformation through *mestizaje* (Indians needed to be whitened through racial mixing) or *multiculturalism* (Indians could access modernity and inclusion by being multicultural) with a model of State transformation (through the

Indianization of the State). After the speech, it was reported that the Vice President and his partner bought some Guarani weavings, enjoyed a traditional barbecued steak – a *churrasco* – and by early afternoon were back on their small plane for the flight to La Paz (Padilla 2013).

Media coverage of these processes does reflect a new political space of future uncertainty emerging. These ways of speaking were picked up and reproduced in media outlets, television, the press, and the ever-expanding arenas of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. On the one hand, Indigenous leaders and language network activists continued to celebrate the new institutes and carry on their own intellectual debates about the technical and ideological substance of these new institutes of language regimentation across different language community processes (see, e.g., Carvajal 2013; in response to Quintanilla Coro [2013]). Though outside the scope of this article, a more exhaustive analysis would seek to further triangulate the interpretation by exploring these fields. In what might be called the mainstream media, there are definite shifts away from the often blatant racism of the recent past. Affirming Howard (2010), state discourse on language regimentation pries open a new space for structuring and reconfiguring new metalinguistic discourse.

In the following months, the media focused largely on the preservation/obligation axis. On the one hand, recognition of a need for preservation of Indigenous languages was prominent, an unsurprising updating of Bolivia's deep embrace of things deemed tradition and folklore. As one article noted, citing the reduction of declared speakers in the (2012) census, "speakers are disappearing" and these institutes hope to "save" them (Terrazas 2013). Unthinkable in the not too distant past, one writer extolled the significance of the first Aymara woman to teach Aymara in a private urban school while wearing the "traditional" *pollera* dress (Calle 2013). Others focused on the new "obligations" of public functionaries. Here there was more ambivalence, if not alarm. One headline warned, "Funcionario público, obligado a hablar un idioma originario" [Public functionaries will be obligated to learn an originary language] (Ortiz 2012). Another, as the state-mandated deadline for public officials approached, chided, "Funcionarios públicos con lento avance in idiomas natives" [Public functionaries making slow progress in native languages] (Mendieta 2014).

A step beyond colonial racism, one should consider these critically. Language regimentation makes Indigenous speakers and non-speakers *objects* of state action, the one to be saved or preserved, the other to be taught a new language to access public-sector jobs. The discourse on the *garantía* of constitutional rights extended to Indigenous language communities is transposed into a story of (potentially onerous) obligations for non-

speakers. Indeed, rather than research and promote Indigenous language revitalization within the Indigenous communities, the new Institutes, at least anecdotally, are charged with finding their own funding sources, chief among them teaching some semblance of the language to non-speakers who hope to access public-sector jobs. In mid-2015, as the deadline to learn Indigenous languages approached, much conversation at the Guarani Language and Culture Institute revolved around increasing pressures by non-speakers to sell them certificates of completion. Methods used to teach Guarani to non-speakers were largely artisanal, even as economic demand grew significantly. Colleagues were concerned that their languages were being converted into a business (*negocio*), and that effective learning would be limited. Against the possibility that the new law would largely be a farce (*farsa*), colleagues argued that despite some Guarani arguments that native speakers should not be credentialing their former oppressors, supporters of the new scenario suggested that if the criollos or “whites” learned Guarani there would be a growing space for Guarani speakers at the regional level. While some non-speakers engaged in new language classes with zeal, others rankled at being “obligated” to learn a language that had little economic or practical value. At this writing, the outcome of this particular component of legislation is unclear.³

Beyond the potential tensions between speakers and non-speakers, what may be significant is the creation of a new linguistic market, a new political economy of language teaching, learning, certification, media production, and mass diffusion. Between 2006 and 2012, as the natural gas economy boomed, the public sector expanded from 75,000 to over 125,000 employees, including teachers, military and police, doctors, judges, oil workers, and holders of political office (Mendieta 2014). Whether any or all of them will learn an Indigenous language (and use it in their activities in any competent way) remains to be seen. How, reporters ask, will these functionaries be taught, tested, and certified? When will they study and learn the languages? Who will teach them and where will they be taught? And, for the long-time observer, the question, equally unanswerable for the moment, is which of these changes will be durable and outlast the inevitable return of other political parties and forces? Will the government hold fast to what will surely generate a future challenge? What impacts will this have on the fragile public valorization of Indigenous languages that is emerging?

³ These observations draw on conversations with members of the Guarani Language and Culture Institute in June of 2015. By 2017, many non-speakers had been credentialed, though their fluency in Guaraní is doubtful.

5 Language regimentation

I have drawn attention here to ideological sites and metadiscursive events that allow for historical comparison and contemporary contextualization of language regimentation across three periods of Bolivian political history. Rather than identify singular “regimes” of language, I argue for a processual understanding of regimentation characterized by ruptures and continuities with the past, as well as ongoing disjunctures between state enunciation and state practice in the present. Seen historically, Indigenous language regimentation emanating from the state had a durable colonial core, one gradually challenged from the grassroots and external international shifts that congealed around the linguistic networks. States variably sought to resist, contain, or channel these processes, discursively and institutionally – through the assimilationist *mestizaje* of the dictatorship era, the multiculturalism of the neoliberal moment, and now through the emerging talk of decolonization. One reviewer of this article argued that in emphasizing public legislative and discursive shifts, I failed to point out that the state has done very little to support all of this rhetoric in practice. In short, if languages were oppressed in 1973, they continue to be oppressed today.⁴ Indeed, despite the economic “boom” associated with the gas economy, many rural Indigenous communities persist largely as before. Clearly, these shifts must be read alongside analyses of the widespread conflicts between the state developmentalist project and Indigenous self-determination. To be sure, as I have pointed out throughout, there has always been a disjuncture between official acts, on-the-ground practices, and changing social and political-economic formations.

Three shifts, nonetheless, are substantial. The first is the growth of the linguistic networks and their insertion in various bureaucratic spaces. This is a social formation comprised of Indigenous teachers, intellectuals, and experts from disparate fields who have negotiated relationships with the current government. They face opposition from numerous fronts, yet they embody long histories of language activism and transnational recognition. Beyond diffuse networks, this is now a social formation situated across various institutions: teacher-training schools, bilingual schools, the Education Ministry, the CEPOs,

⁴ One might point to racist statements made by members of the ruling MAS party during the TIPNIS conflicts, to ongoing obstacles to bilingual education implementation, or to a recent attack by the ruling party on a judge dismissed for being insufficiently loyal to government interests. In his defense, the judge countered by speaking to the Congress only in Aymara, sending the session into disarray since a translator could not be found and MAS party officials – many of whom repeat the rhetoric of decolonization incessantly – could not understand him (Farfán 2014).

the new Language and Culture Institutes, the Indigenous universities, and so on. Their actual work includes writing, translating, teaching, and investigating diverse dimensions of language. Sociologically speaking, this social formation serves as a kind of mediating axis between the apparatus of the state and the field of language policy, scholarship, and practice. Presently, the government's use of revenues from natural gas has allowed for the expansion of the public sector and support of these actors. A change of government would likely erode the material base of support for this field. To the extent that this capture of public goods by a growing linguistic network represents a concrete grounding of Indigenous languages in state power, regardless of metadiscursive meanderings, we see a new economy of tongues.

Second, and returning to Kroskrity (1999), I have highlighted the polysemic field of an emergent language regime and the disjunctures between state enunciations in support of Indigenous language regimentation and wider political and economic policies, discourses, and actions. There is thus, even with an Aymara president, a deep state ambivalence about Indigenous languages that illustrates the durable coloniality of the state form. A state made to speak and enforce the authority of Spanish is not easily changed. Official language rights do authorize an alternative epistemic community. Yet this sits uneasily with the liberal framework of multiculturalism which promoted individual rights to identity but eternally refused the epistemic and temporal equality of Indigenous tongues, much less their political authority. It also exists in tension with the current nationalist framework of state-led development, which prefers a language of class, national unity, and highly centralized authority, with the proliferation of legal categories to define and contain every aspect of difference within the space of law. Furthermore, outside of the "linguistic class" there is also deep ambivalence among the public, the ruling party, and much of the Indigenous-language community itself. Understanding whether and how this new configuration of language regimentation is filtering into the practices of Indigenous-language communities and their often tension-fraught relationships in multilingual public spheres requires another set of ethnographic forays.

To be sure, and third, the situation of once "oppressed" languages is being transformed. Already in 1997, at a workshop on language and cultural policy, Aymara linguist Juan de Díos Yapita complained publicly of having tired of hearing about how his and other languages were "oppressed" languages. In the current moment, the national director of the Plurinational Institutes, Pedro Apala, also Aymara, speaks, as above, of the foray of Indigenous languages into science, philosophy, and literature. With the rise of Aymara and Quechua merchants, politicians, and an Indigenous middle class, the resurgence of Indigenous intellectuals, and the dedication of state support to all Indigenous languages, at least as

future projections, these languages are oppressed no more. The new Institutes of Language and Culture have engaged in an explosion of public events, marches, and social media and digital productions, including the reclamation of an Indigenous mother tongue by the Afrobolivian Movement. There is a political shift underway that allows for a new public presence of Bolivians formerly stigmatized by language and race, and the retreat of what one *criollo* friend referred to as the *blancuchos*, the ‘whitish’ classes. Will the current linguistic turn be sufficient to create an equilibrium, as Albó called it, between socioeconomic shifts and language shifts? Or will these efforts be relegated to a folkloric and performative dimension? One long-time Quechua activist warned that all of the public valorization might even lead to “linguistic lethargy” (*letargia lingüística*), as speakers see state actions aimed at languages as sufficient, and fail to recognize language shift and the urgency for maintaining intergenerational transmission (Carvajal 2010). Another Indigenous language activist with the new Guarani institute celebrated the fact that the Guarani language was now backed with the *garantía* of the state. Yet he lamented the loss of elder generations we had worked with in the 1990s. As the gas economy rapidly transforms their territory, he said, “Many don’t want to be Indigenous anymore.” Even so, he added, with little irony, in reference to the new demand of non-Guarani speaking civil servants trying to get certified in the language, “We’ve got over three hundred students in our Guarani classes.” The paradoxes of Indigenous language regimentation continue.

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