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Thesis Prospectus Draft

Language Maintenance in Chile

Research Question / Overview:

This thesis will focus on the maintenance of indigenous languages in Chile, specifically Mapuzugun and Aymara of the Mapuche and Aymara tribes. First of all, the thesis will discuss the issue of language maintenance by addressing language shift, death, and revival. Secondly, it will look at the legislative methods of the Chilean government to help revitalize and maintain these languages, which includes the promulgation of the *ley indígena*, ratification of the ILO-convention 169, and creation of government agencies such as the National Corporation for Indigenous Development known as CONADI. Thirdly, it will analyze the practical methods put into place as a result, such as school programs to teach children of indigenous descent their mother tongue and the results of these programs. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of Chile's policies aimed at reversing language shift by looking at levels of fluency since the institution of these measures.

Background:

Language maintenance, according to Spolsky in *Language Policy*, happens when a person or a group directs “efforts to manipulate the language situation”.¹ This can be manifested in various ways, from government imposed language laws to grass-root led movements for language recognition. This thesis will be more directed toward what is called reversing language shift.

¹ Spolsky, Bernard. *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print, 8.

Language shift is a phenomenon in which “speech communities whose native languages are threatened because their intergenerational continuity is proceeding negatively, with fewer and fewer users (speakers, readers, writers and even understanders) or uses every generation,” therefore, reversing language shift aims to stabilize if not increase ‘intergenerational continuity’ of a language.²

Reverse language shift has been achieved in the past; however, it seems to be far more likely for minority languages to become obsolete than to revitalize. Key factors play toward success or failure: the number of speakers, the level of fluency of the speakers and their descendants, the attitude towards the language, and government language policy. Furthermore, the language managers, or the people who influence a language situation, are the actors within governments, special interest groups, or even families.³

In Chile there have been efforts starting in the early 1990’s to reverse the language shift of specific indigenous languages, but others have manifested more recently. The *ley indígena* of Chile was ratified on September 28, 1993, by the first democratic government after Chile’s dictatorship. This law recognized the major indigenous tribes within Chile and concurrently gave specific rights to the tribes. Under “Titulo IV: de la cultura y la educación indígena” the beginning recognition of language maintenance by the state is seen:

² Fishman, Joshua A. *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991. Print, 1.

³ Spolsky, Bernard. *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print, 8.

Article 28

The recognition, respect and protection of indigenous cultures and languages will include:

- a) The use and conservation of indigenous languages, alongside Spanish in areas with a high density of indigenous peoples;
- b) The establishment in the national education system of a program unit that enables learners to access adequate knowledge of indigenous cultures and languages and that enables them to assess them positively;
- c) Encouraging the spread of radio and television stations in the regions of high indigenous presence in indigenous language programs and support for the creation of radio and indigenous media;
- d) The promotion and establishment of chairs of history, culture and indigenous languages in higher education;
- e) The obligation of the Civil Registry to record the names of indigenous people in the way their parents express them and with the norms of phonetic transcription they indicate, and
- f) The promotion of artistic and cultural heritage protection and architectural, archaeological, cultural and indigenous history.

To comply with what is stated in the preceding paragraph, the Corporation, in coordination with the Ministry of Education, promotes plans and programs for the promotion of indigenous cultures.

It should consider agreements with public or private national, regional or communal, with objectives consistent with those outlined in this article. It should also be involved in the fulfillment of those purposes to regional governments and municipalities.⁴

The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 took place in Geneva in 1989, which deals with the rights of indigenous peoples and specifically the protection of their languages. On September 15, 2008, Chile ratified the binding international law, and it went into effect the following year. Article 28 of the ILO-convention 169 states the role of the government in maintenance of Indigenous languages as:

Article 28

1. Children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong. When this is not practicable, the competent authorities shall undertake consultations with these peoples with a view to the adoption of measures to achieve this objective.
2. Adequate measures shall be taken to ensure that these peoples have the opportunity to attain fluency in the national language or in one of the official languages of the country.
3. Measures shall be taken to preserve and promote the development and practice of the indigenous languages of the peoples concerned.⁵

⁴ "Ley Indígena." *Ley Indígena 19.253*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.mapuche.info/indgen/ley-4.html>>.

⁵ Feiring, Birgitte. *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Rights in Practice - A Guide to ILO-Convention 169*. International Labour Organization. ILO Publications, 2009. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/publication/wcms_106474.pdf>, 191.

Chile has legally bound itself to the protection and propagation of the indigenous culture, which in certain instances includes the indigenous languages.

Data/Methodology

This thesis will begin by looking at what language management, reversing language shift, and being a threatened language means. Additionally, the thesis will outline the causes for failure or success in reversing language shift. To define and explore these terms I will look at Joshua A. Fishman's *Reversing Language Shift*, Bernard Spolsky's *Language Policy*, and Suzanne Romaine's *Bilingualism*. I will look to *Reversing Language Shift* to explain what language shift means for a people and society, and ways to attempt reversing it. Spolsky's *Language Policy* takes a look at a newer field of language policy and its effects on language and its ability to manage a language. Romaine's *Bilingualism* shows important factors into the effectiveness of reversing language shift to stop the chances of language death.

The thesis will then examine the legal obligations of the Chilean government in the preservation/revitalization of indigenous languages by looking at the *Ley Indígena* and the ILO-convention 169. Spolsky's *Language Policy* will aid in determining the effectiveness or relevancy of these laws in maintaining the indigenous languages. Additionally, the Chilean government agency CONADI and the Ministry of Education have government documents and school curricula that manifest these requirements put in place by the *Ley Indígena* and the ILO-convention 169.

These guidelines will determine the goal and requirements of the Chilean government in the maintenance of the indigenous languages. I will look at primary sources such as the Chilean government's poll on the *pueblos indígenas* to gain perspective on the effectiveness of the public

policies on reversing language shift by comparing levels of fluency throughout the years. To further the understanding of language shift or the reversal of it I will look at *Perfil sociolingüístico de lenguas Mapuche y Aymara en la region metropolitana*, which breaks down the indigenous groups into different categories such as rural vs. urban, age, and gender. With these subcategories I will be able to see if reversing language shift has been successful throughout whole tribes or just certain groups. This article also shows attitudes and importance of learning/maintaining the indigenous language among the subcategories mentioned earlier.

Preliminary Findings/Hypothesis

According to *Perfil sociolingüístico de lenguas Mapuche y Aymara en la región metropolitana*, the metropolitan region and a region called Araucanía have the highest concentration of indigenous people in Chile.⁶ In Araucanía, indigenous people make up 30.1% of the regional population and 24.6% of the total indigenous population. In the metropolitan area, they make up only 4.1 percent of the regional population, but it still contains 24% of the total indigenous population.⁷ These numbers are important, as Romaine states, “among the external factors cited as significant in various studies of language maintenance, shift and death are: numerical strength of the group in relation to other minorities and majorities...settlement patterns, ties with the homeland...government policy towards language and education of minorities, and patterns of language use.”⁸ This concentration is an important part in developing language policy to target these areas where it is more likely to succeed. The Encuesta Casen 2009 de Pueblos Indígenas

⁶ Saavedra, Luis G., and Mario T. Alcayaga. *Perfil sociolingüístico de lenguas Mapuche Y Aymara en la región metropolitana*. CONADI. LOM Ediciones, 2009. Web. <http://www.educarchile.cl/Userfiles/P0001/File/perfil_mapuche_y_aymara_en_RM.pdf>, 9.

⁷ *Pueblos Indígenas Encuesta CASEN 2009*. Ministerio De Planificación. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <http://www.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/casen2009/casen_indigena_2009.pdf>, 6.

⁸ Romaine, Suzanne. *Bilingualism*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995. Print, 40.

and the *Perfil sociolingüístico de lenguas Mapuche Y Aymara en la región metropolitana* look at differences among rural and urban indigenous populations.

I have found, according to the Encuesta Casen 2009 de Pueblos Indígenas, that 12% of the indigenous population can speak and understand their native language, which is down from 14.2% in 2006.⁹ The breakdown by age can be seen in the table below.

Age Group ¹⁰	% that can speak and/or understand
0-17	10.6% ¹¹
18-29	20.8%
30-44	28.2%
45-59	31.1%
Above 60	42.3%

From these statistics, we can say that something must be done to maintain the indigenous languages of Chile. A useful tool developed by Fishman in *Reversing Language Shift* is an eight-level scale called the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), which is an instrument to analyze the level of endangerment of a language. This scale is well-known and used in other sources as a way to look at the effectiveness of language policy. Fishman also thinks that language policy is ineffective if the ‘threatened’ people have no desire to reverse language shift. However, a group that is pro-reversing language shift that is coupled with

⁹ *Pueblos Indígenas Encuesta CASEN 2009*. Ministerio De Planificación. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <http://www.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/casen2009/casen_indigena_2009.pdf>, 4.

¹⁰ *Pueblos Indígenas Encuesta CASEN 2009*, 5

¹¹ *Pueblos Indígenas Encuesta CASEN 2009*, 5

government aid has a higher possibility of language revitalization. *Perfil sociolingüístico de lenguas Mapuche y Aymara en la región metropolitana* uses several methods to measure the flow of language between generations, which Fishman describes as key to the survival of a language.

The Chilean government has established a way for indigenous people to get involved through the agency CONADI, which consists of “directly elected indigenous representatives, advised and directed government programs to assist the economic development of indigenous people.”¹² One of the most practical methods taken by the Chilean government is the Intercultural Education branch of the Ministry of Education. Looking at the *Decreto SLI N°280 (Marco curricular Sector Lengua Indígena)*, we can see the plan of development in basic education. Each year a new level is added until in 2017 when 8 consecutive years of basic education of these indigenous languages will be offered.¹³ Also starting in 2012, it will be obligatory for schools with more than 20% indigenous heritage to offer the segments of basic education.¹⁴

The public policy of the Chilean government is trying to aid the indigenous population in the promulgation of the *Ley Indígena*, ratification of the ILO-convention 169, and the establishment of government agencies of CONADI and Intercultural Education, but the levels of fluency have dropped from the Encuesta Casen data of 2006 to 2009. However, looking at the drop in fluency among the total indigenous population will not let us properly measure if the policies put into place have increased fluency, and/or if intergenerational language transmission. Therefore, this

¹² "Chile." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State, n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78884.htm>>.

¹³ Jimenez, Monica. *Decreto N. 0280*. Ministerio De Educación. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.mineduc.cl/usuarios/intercultural/doc/201207301051420.decreto280.pdf>>, 2.

¹⁴ *Orientaciones para comprender la implementación del sector de lengua indígena*. Ministerio De Educación. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.mineduc.cl/usuarios/intercultural/doc/201104071242380.Orientaciones-SLI.pdf>>.

thesis will analyze earlier census data to ascertain whether the implementation of government policies has helped or hurt the level of fluency in native speakers by comparing increases/decreases in each age group in different years.

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