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“IF ENGLISH WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR JESUS...” MONOLINGUISMO Y MALA FE¹

Abstract:

The well-known "If English was good enough for Jesus..." joke offers a rare, self-conscious glimpse into US society's craziness around language, and also into the religious and geopolitical entanglements involved. This essay tries to sort out some of that craziness, going back to Teddy Roosevelt's declarations in 1919 and the debates around immigration during and after World War I. The liberal foundations of Saussurian linguistics are examined as yet another source of monolingualist misrecognition, and examples from language politics in the Andean region help illuminate the enduring mutations of empire and coloniality in the Américas, including the Mexico-Arizona border region where Multilingual, 2.0? was engendered. Finally, the recognition of the reality of multilingualism in some areas of government and the judicial system in the US offers a countervalance to the bad faith monolingualism that prevails elsewhere.

El conocido chiste, "Si el inglés fue suficiente para Jesucristo..." ofrece un raro momento de autoreconocimiento sobre la mala fe que existe en la sociedad estadounidense alrededor de la cuestión de la lengua, con sus dimensiones religiosas y geopolíticas. Este ensayo indaga esta mala fe, recordando las declaraciones de Teddy Roosevelt, y los debates sobre la migración durante y después de la primera guerra mundial. Las fundaciones liberales de la lingüística saussuriana aparecen como otra fuente de mistificación monolingüista, mientras que algunos ejemplos de las políticas lingüísticas de la zona andina iluminan el impacto continuo del imperio y de la colonialidad en las Américas, incluyendo la zona fronteriza México-Arizona donde nace el proyecto de Multilingual, 2.0? Finalmente se nota el reconocimiento de la realidad del multilinguismo en ciertas áreas del gobierno y del sistema judicial estadounidenses, como punto de contraste con la mala fe monolingüista que prevalece en otras esferas.

Keywords:

imperialism ♦ language policy ♦ monolingualism ♦ citizenship ♦ Peru ♦ structuralism ♦ linguistics

I'm reminded today of an occasion ten years ago when I was invited to speak at a conference on bilingualism, organized by Doris Sommer at Harvard University. We were impressed that Harvard's then president, Larry Summers, would welcome us. Our subject, we thought, was at last being taken seriously. And so it was. Instead of giving the usual 90-second nod, Summers surprised us with a 20 minute harangue. "I am sure you all mean well," he said, but (I'm paraphrasing here) the subject you will be discussing here is of no intellectual interest, and moreover, it is a threat to the society. Channeling his avatar Samuel Huntington, Summers told us, "If you people have your way, twenty years from now, instead of one Harvard there will be two, one speaking English and one Spanish. And that would be the end of the university." This odd incident came back to mind when Rick Santorum made his extraordinary metida de pata in Puerto Rico in March 2012. Asked in a press interview if he supported Puerto Rican statehood, he replied "Like in every other state, it [must comply] with this and every other federal law, and that is that English should be the main language." (Jaffe 2012) And most of you know the firestorm that followed. Santorum in turn was channeling his former mentor Newt Gingrich, whose 1996 Contract with America called bilingualism "a menace to American civilization." (Hartmann 2006)

I cite these anecdotes not just to remind us that Arizona does not have a monopoly on fireworks around language, but also to indicate the kind of gratuitous aggressiveness that can be triggered in the American psyche by the idea of multilingualism, and the fact of Spanish. In both of these instances, the aggressiveness was uncalled for: nobody asked Santorum about language. Like Summers, he volunteered his faux pas. So we must ask: what called the aggression forth? What disruptive sprite induced Summers to abuse his presidential role? What possessed Santorum to say that one thing that would guarantee him an electoral wipeout in Puerto Rico?

English monolingualism operates in the US not as a policy but as a dogma, that is, a committed belief that is unresponsive to reality. This attitude is summed up by the apocryphal Texan who is supposed to have said, "If English was good

enough for Jesus, it's good enough for me." The line captures vividly and parodies the dogmatic character of American monolingualism, and its detachment from reality and history. This is what I call the language blind spot. The gram of self-mockery in this anecdote gives me a gram of hope – perhaps this mala fe and all the social and epistemic violence it brings with it can be replaced with a more truthful, good-faith engagement with language in América. In these few pages, I'd like to touch on a few of what I see as the pressure points around multilingualism in the United States, the points of misfit between imagination and reality, between desire and possibility, that produce craziness and mala fe. I'll extend the vision outward to the Américas as a whole, and also focus in a bit on the border zone where we are now, here in Tucson. I'll touch on immigration, colonialism and empire, and the contours of modern linguistics. Some of what I say will be familiar to you, but I hope not all of it.

Larry Summers and Rick Santorum are not themselves strangers to multilingualism. Summers' maternal grandparents were Romanian Jews who came to the US sometime before 1920, probably speaking Romanian and Yiddish. Santorum's father migrated to the US from Italy in 1930 at the age of seven. Both these men, then, grew up in families living an experience that produces enormous numbers of monolingual Americans: language loss, the interruption of language transmission across generations. The United States is full of families whose older and younger generations can't converse or develop complex relationships with one another, and who suffer for it. In a moment of triumphalism, Nathan Glazer once said that immigrant languages "shriveled in the air of freedom while they had apparently flourished under adversity in Europe." (Glazer 1966, 361) The triumphal tale of learning English and making good carries within it the story of language loss, which people often recall with sorrow, longing, regret, and sometimes envy and resentment toward those who took the bilingual path. This is one point on which the experience of Native peoples and immigrants intersect in the Américas. Language pain, as I've come to call it, is a big source of the craziness around language in the US, mostly because of the way we silence it.

I suggested Larry Summers was ventriloquizing his colleague Sam Huntington, but of course it was Teddy Roosevelt who consecrated the monolingualist dogma that so inopportunistly takes over our politicians' imaginations. "We have room for but one language here," Roosevelt said in a famous letter to the American Defense Society in January 1919 (three days before he died), "and that is the English language. And we have room for but one sole loyalty, and that is a loyalty to the American people." Language and loyalty. He goes on:

We should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American, and nothing but an American. There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. (1919)

It's a remarkably strong statement. Monolingualism in English is coded here as the essential outward sign of loyalty; bi- or multilingualism becomes the outward sign of divided loyalty, which, to paraphrase Roosevelt, is no loyalty at all. This monolingual loyalty is the precondition of the right to equality. In its absence, discrimination ceases to be an outrage.

Roosevelt was writing in the context of a particular phase in the history of multilingualism in the US. In 1890, 82% of immigrants to the United States came from northern and western Europe. Between 1900 and 1920, the demographics shifted, and 64% of immigrants were coming from Eastern, Central and Southern Europe, bringing a new round of unfamiliarity. At the same time, World War I had turned the US's most widely used second language, German, from a fact of daily life into an internal threat. All over the United States, there were moves to ban schooling in German, church services, newspapers, and library books in German, German street names and surnames, its use in public business—all things that were commonplace before WWI. In the Midwest and Pennsylvania it was common for towns to live bilingually in German and English, as so many do today in Spanish and English. As with Spanish, German became a threat not

because it did not belong in the United States, but because it did. It was not an alien language; it lived here. But in 1918-19, the governor of Iowa issued a Babel Proclamation prohibiting all foreign languages from schools and public places, and Nebraska banned instruction of any kind in languages other than English. Such proposals met vigorous opposition, as they do today. As soon as the war ended, language rights cases began landing in American courts, and rights to multilingualism usually won. The Supreme Court voided Nebraska's ban in 1923, and communities in northern Texas won the right to keep their German-English schools. German never recovered as "the second language of public life in the United States" (Wikipedia 2012). The hyphen didn't disappear either. In the 2000 census, 26% of the "white non-hispanic" population still identified itself as German-American.

Roosevelt's monolingualist manifesto responds in a customarily perverse way to a fundamental reality about the United States: the US grows its capitalist economy by importing labor and expertise from other parts of the world. It has done this continuously for 400 years, through all kinds of mechanisms: slavery, indentured servitude, open-door policies, guest-worker contracts, refugee programs, student visas, sponsorships and specialist visa programs, and of course the huge sanctioned undocumented labor system. Importing people and their abilities is the mechanism by which the United States builds itself as an economy and a society, and that's as true today as it was in 1850. 128,000 Chinese citizens emigrated to the US in the 1870s, and 1.5 million came in 2010. This strategy necessarily makes multilingualism a permanent, constitutive, systemic condition of US society. As one wave of immigrants settles in, another follows, necessarily, from somewhere else, introducing yet other languages, religions and physiognomies. Monolingualist (and monocultural) ideology treats this fact as a collateral or contingent matter, a side issue for which the state has no accountability, rather than a central, systemic feature of the whole enterprise. This misrecognition is another big source of the mala fe of our monolingüismo.

Linguistic theory has not helped people to grasp multilingualism. The ideal of language and citizenship that Roosevelt had in mind was, or so I want to suggest, embedded in a famous drawing that appeared at almost the very same

time his manifesto did, in the founding text of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1915):



This is Saussure's diagram of "le circuit de la parole," the circuit of speech. The act of parole, he says, assumes at least deux individus (apparently there's no talking to oneself in Saussure). Concepts reside in A's brain, associated with the linguistic signs or acoustic images that serve to express them. A's brain transmits to A's organs of phonation an impulse correlating to the image; sound waves emerge from A's mouth to B's ear; and the circuit repeats itself in B's head in inverse order, transmitting the acoustic image from B's ear to B's brain.

Let us ponder this drawing a little more. The two figures are an interesting combination of markings and absence of markings. They are identical in appearance, Caucasian, generically male, and young. Their expressions are serious but calm. Their eyes are open and they are looking straight at each other, suggesting equality of rank. They are unclothed, even hairless, bearing no marks of class, religion, place, or livelihood. No surroundings define where they are. Their bodies are outside the frame. Language operates identically and symmetrically between them. Only one language is in play in the situation, and it is identically shared by both. You've probably guessed where I'm going with this: I want to suggest that Saussure's deux individus are the figure of the modern liberal democratic citizenship Roosevelt was committed to: fraternally bonded, rational rights-bearing individual citizen subjects, in "exact equality," as Roosevelt put it. Their identicalness represents a relation of both equivalence and equality, in relation to each other and in relation to langue, the language. Saussure models "le circuit de la parole" as a reciprocal, symmetrical, and reversible exchange between equals in which equivalence implies equality and equity. The physiognomic identicalness of the two individuals in the drawing

renders visually the idea that A's chain of signification will be "reproduced inversely" but identically in B's brain. Modern linguistics, it appears, was founded in/on the principles of liberalism.

Let's juxtapose Saussure's drawing with another depiction of a speech situation made almost exactly 300 years earlier, in a work by an Andean indigenous writer from colonial Peru.



This is from Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, a 1200-page manuscript completed in 1613 and discovered in the Royal Library of Copenhagen in the early 1900s. The book includes a ferocious critique of Spanish

colonialism as it had unfolded in the 16th-century Andes. Titled “Mala confición” [Bad or Evil Confession] the drawing’s erratically spelled caption reads:

Mala conficion que hace los padres y curas de las doutrinas. Aporrea a las Yndias preñadas y a las viejitas y a indios. Y a las dichas solteras no las quiere confesar de edad e veinte años, no se confiesa ni ay remedio de ellas. (612)

Evil confession done by the priests and fathers of the doctrines. They pound away at the pregnant Indian women and the old ones, and Indians. As for single women in their twenties, they refuse to confess them, so they are unconfessed and there is no solution for them.

The circuit de la parole here is as follows: an unmarried indigenous woman who has been impregnated by a priest wishes to confess and gain absolution. The priest kicks her away, refusing to confess “her” sin, which is really his own. This, or so the text implies, keeps her sexually accessible to him, and prevents her from spelling out his sin in her confession.

From the standpoint of liberalism, Guaman Poma’s drawing depicts everything Saussure’s seeks to dispel. We see “two individuals” joined in multi-faceted relations of radical hierarchy, inequality, passion, and violence. They differ by gender, race, age, status, education, livelihood, and emotional state. The drawing marks all of these differences on their bodies. An institutional setting is present. The point of commonality that brings them together here is Catholicism, which is also the arbiter of their differences. The speech act involved, confession, is predicated on an asymmetry of power: one has the power to give or withhold absolution. The other has the power to ask or beg for it. There is no reciprocity or reversibility here. There is despair, rage, lust, rape, mala fe—and multilingualism. The two are native speakers of different, wholly unrelated languages. The acoustic signals passing between them will not be identical. They will be marked by their social and historical differences. Three languages are in play, likely distributed as follows: the priest is a native speaker of Spanish and is literate in it as well as in Latin. He may have sufficient mastery of Quechua to preach and receive confession, as the Spanish church encouraged. The woman is

a native speaker of Quechua who may know some Spanish or none, and she is not literate. Her access to the doctrines that bind her body and soul runs through the priest, who does not administer them in her interest. But she also inhabits an Andean history, cosmology, and social world to which he has little access. Both probably understand a good deal more of the other's language than they speak.

Through the lens of liberalism, Guaman Poma's drawing "makes sense" as a figure of illiberal, nonsecular, pre-modern absolutism in its multilingual, racialized, colonial form. Many of us here today will find it legible in that way as well. On the other hand, could time be reversed, probably the first thing Guaman Poma would say about Saussure's drawing is that it is hopelessly incomplete. The people have no bodies, no social markings, there's no setting. Without these things, A and B in fact can have no idea of what, if anything, they can or should say to each other, or whether and how they will be understood. What, he might ask, is going on below their necks? Is A holding a knife to B's chest? Or are their arms around each others' waists? Such a picture, Guaman Poma would probably say, can tell us nothing at all about how language operates, either in the world or in the brain.

As it happens, that's also pretty much what French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari said in 1980, in their wholesale critique of modern linguistics in *Mille plateaux* (1980). Interlocution, they argue, is "a site for the contest of forces, not the cooperative exchange of information. [...] The building brick of language is not the predicative sentence, the assertion, but the slogan, the mot d'ordre... the violence of interpellation." (1980, 108-9) Language must be conceived very differently from the way it is conceptualized by modern linguistics. From this standpoint, the difference between these two drawings lays out the difference between two different conceptions of language. The distance is not temporal—there is nothing dated about the speech situation or the social order Guaman Poma depicts. The Catholic church is in upheaval today, for example, over precisely the kind of conduct Guaman Poma depicts. Scholars of racism have shown how interpellation is the central mechanism for producing injury with language (Matsuda et al 2003; Riley 2004; Pratt 2009). If you're one of nearly three million people living in an American prison, you inhabit Guaman Poma's

social paradigm more than Saussure's. Keeping bodies out of the picture, it seems, was Saussure's way of keeping hierarchy, desire, and the contest of forces out of the picture, while naturalizing the relations of equity and reciprocity that are his social ideal. Deleuze and Guattari, in a reactive response, aspire to reveal the willful blindness this requires. In short, modern linguistics has had its own language blind spot, and its own share of monolingüist mala fe. There lies a part of the challenge for critical multilingualism projects like the one *Multilingual, 2.0?* aims to undertake.

The factor that was omnipresent for Guaman Poma in Peru, and out of sight and mind for Saussure in Europe, was colonialism. The legacy of colonialism and empire—the force scholars now call coloniality—is absolutely essential to grasping the force-fields around multilingualism in the Américas, even today—especially today. Let me introduce this vast and vexed subject with a story that connects directly back to Guaman Poma but also resonates with recent events here in Arizona. In April of 2009, a controversy broke out in Peru around someone who is a direct heir of the woman in Guaman Poma's drawing, a member of Congress named Hilaria Supa.

Supa is a seasoned political leader from the Andes, a frequent delegate to UN events, and a native speaker of Quechua. Like the last President of Brazil (Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva) and the current President of Bolivia (Evo Morales), she has



had almost no formal education. She taught herself to read and write Spanish. In April 2009, with malicious intent, a Lima newspaper *El Comercio* published on its front page some handwritten notes stolen from Supa's desk in Congress. Like Guaman Poma's book, they were full of nonstandard spelling and grammatical forms typical of Andean Spanish and of unschooled writing. The editor of the paper, Aldo Mariátegui, wrote a column where he too sounds

possessed by the language demon (2009). Notice how elaborate the outpouring becomes, how much heat there is:

Pero no se puede pagar más de S/. 20 mil al mes y darle tanto poder y responsabilidades a quienes no están mínimamente iluminados por las luces de la cultura.... Pues aquí lo que se pone realmente en debate es si es sano para el país que pueda acceder al Congreso alguien con un nivel cultural tan bajo, cuya ortografía y gramática revelan serias carencias y sin aparente ánimo de enmienda....

We can't pay more than 20,000 soles a month, and give so much power and responsibility to people are not minimally illuminated by the lights of culture.... What's really at stake here is whether it is healthy for the country that someone with such a low level of culture can reach the Congress, someone whose grammar and spelling reveal serious deficiencies, with apparently no desire for improvement....

Y es indiscutible que una persona con una instrucción tan, digamos, elemental -siendo generosos- poco puede aportar en la elaboración de leyes, en la fiscalización de casos complejos, en la reflexión diaria de hacia dónde debe ir la nave del Estado.... Una persona así posiblemente sólo se va a limitar a repetir lugares comunes, a oponerse a todo sólo por oponerse, a estar a la defensiva ante cualquier idea nueva, a ser prejuiciosa, a buscar llamar la atención mediante..., a descalificar al adversario con el eterno recurso de victimizarse, a ser agresiva.... Lamentablemente, todo lo anterior ha caracterizado a la congresista Supa....

There is no question that someone with such an elemental, to put it kindly, level of instruction has little to offer to lawmaking, resolving complex cases, daily reflection on whether the ship of state should go. Such a person possibly will be limited to repeating commonplaces, opposing for opposition's sake, becoming defensive toward any new idea, to being prejudiced, publicity seeking, to dismiss adversaries with the eternal device of victimization, to be aggressive.... Unfortunately Congresswoman Supa is all of the above....

Mariátegui concludes:

Por eso el voto debe ser voluntario y además debe haber requisitos extras para ser congresista, como grado universitario.

Voting should be voluntary and there should be extra requirements, such as a university degree, to be a member of congress.

The cruelty and aggression here tell you something about the perdurance of the colonial divide in Peru, as elsewhere. Mariátegui's editorial unleashed more heat, but not the kind he was looking for. The Congress repudiated his statements the same day they appeared. The Linguistics Faculty of the Catholic University condemned it as "an act of discrimination and linguistic violence unacceptable in a democratic society" ("un acto de discriminación y violencia lingüística—inaceptable en una sociedad democrática," Pronunciamiento 2009). Another linguist resignified the front-page story: "Let us see it as a sign that something remarkable has taken place: Andean Spanish is being written in the National Congress," ("Veámosla también como la huella de que algo extraordinario ha ocurrido: se escribe español andino en el Congreso de la República," Mondoñedo 2009).

Hilaria Supa herself responded with heat of her own, a fiery speech in the Congress, repudiating the mistreatment there and in the media by people who "do not realize we are a multicultural and plurilingual nation," and condemning monolingualist mala fe. "Mr. President," she said, "the language I speak is Quechua, not a language of dogs. I am sure that if a gringo came to speak in this congress, he would be applauded for chewing up the Spanish language." (More mala fe). She praises her culture, points out it was the state's failing that she had no access to schooling, demands biliteracy in Quechua and Spanish, and demands recognition of the huge constituency she represents and her qualifications to represent it. Supa made this speech in the Congress entirely in Quechua. Here's the opening paragraph:

Allin P'unchay kachun presidente, allin p'unchay kachun liu Perú
Suyunpaq; anchhaynan chay Congreso Ukhupi, chhaynataqmi
qelqaqkunapas rimaqkunapas; manayá cuentata qokunkucho, imaynas

Perú suyu; imaynas culturanchis, imaynas rimayninchis... Presidente noqaqa rimani runasimitan, manan alqo simitachu rimani Presidente; maypachansi hoq gringo rimanman chay ukhupi, chaytaqa t'aqllayukunkumanyá; pero noqaqa representani hoq cultura, sumaq culturatata, sumaq yachayta noqaqa representani Presidente, chayrayku noqa reqsisqa kani internacional, manaraq congresuman chayamushiaspa, defendine Derechos humanos llaqtaymanta, chayrayku noqaqa preparakuni....

Supa ends by saying that from here on, she will make her interventions in Congress in Quechua and not in Spanish. And so she did for a while, so that for the first time the Quechua language was used as a legislative language in the Peruvian Congress; bilingual members were the privileged listeners, and monolingual Spanish speakers had to seek out translators and interpreters. There's a sequel to this story that I'll tell at the end, but right now we might recall efforts to impose English litmus tests for elected office here in the US, aimed at Spanish speakers. Coloniality is still in play here, too.

Colonialism produces a multilingualism structured in relations of domination and subjugation. When the colonizers show up, the people they encounter become "indigenous" or "aboriginal." They become, that is, those who were "there/here from the before" – where the before is marked by the arrival of the colonizer. Carried forward into the future, indigenous people's languages become an incontrovertible manifestation of their historical integrity as peoples unfolding in time across the colonial watershed, the thing neither given nor taken by the colonizer. Settler colonialism, the kind that took place in the Américas, produces societies that are multilingual force-fields of conflict, collaboration, entanglement, coercion, resistance, proximity, and distance, in which multiple social orders coexist, with new institutions repeatedly layered on, and interacting with, prior ones.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the complexity of the entanglements that empire and colonialism have brought about in the United States, and the heat that their friction has generated, particularly here, in the Southwest. What is now "the border" was already a frontier before Europeans arrived—the northern

fringe of the Aztec empire based in Central Mexico, the outer zone of its trade routes, inhabited by tribes that it saw as untamed. Under Spanish settler colonialism, this became a war zone between settlers and Indians, and after 1848 Anglo-American expansion layered over and grafted onto all of that, drawing a border that for many mexicanos didn't exist, and for others was a defense against Anglo encroachment from the north. The result, says Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, was "a war-based cross-border economy," (2010) a phrase that resonates today. Guidotti-Hernández's illuminating reconstruction of the 1871 Camp Grant Massacre explores the complexities, mapping the interactions of men, women, Mexicans, Tucsonenses, Anglos, and indigenous people, which resulted in the massacre, 70 miles from here, of 108 Aravaipa Apaches who had just surrendered after years of warfare against invading settlers. The war-based, cross-border economy still booms here today.

Spanish in the Southwest, and all over the United States, inhabits multiple narratives—as a language of the colonizer in relation to the indigenous, the language of the colonized in relation to English, a language that belongs here and inhabits the landscape, and a language that arrives daily from other parts in the migrant stream. In the frontier war zone, undocumented migrants have become the Apaches—the untamed force to be eliminated at all cost. Three strands of empire converge here (Aztec, Spanish and Anglo-American), along with two colonial regimes with all their baggage; endless figure-eights of migration in both directions as labor markets wax and wane; and the layering in of white migrants looking for sunshine and golf—a lot of frictions producing a lot of heat. We are indebted to scholars of Mexican American Studies and Native American Studies, including many at this university, for producing the knowledge needed to grasp the frictions, the heat, and their histories. When US society gets grounded in its own reality and history, that's when it will become a little less crazy around language.

Hilaria Supa's story makes a further point about multilingualism and language hierarchy. What gives Supa her power to defy coloniality, to make heat, in this situation, besides her own extraordinary courage, is the fact that she is, and sees herself as, a full-blown, fully fluent adult speaker of Quechua. She can say

anything she wants or needs to say in that language. That sense of linguistic competence and adult fluency empowers her to say, as she did in the Congress, “You will never make me bow down, ever.” In a moving book on living bilingually in the US called *Tongue Ties*, the Cuban-American writer Gustavo Pérez Firmat says “One of the most disabling forms of self-doubt arises from the conviction that we cannot speak our native language well enough” (157). In the US, the monolingual dogma puts speakers of other languages continuously in dilemmas of disablement and unresolved belonging. The UC-Berkeley education scholar Lisa García Bedolla reports that in California, entering kindergartners whose parents report any significant contact with languages other than English are required to take a two-hour English competence test, regardless of what the parents say about their child’s knowledge of English. Only 12% of the kids taking the test subsequently qualify as English proficient. The other 88% percent, many of whom are as proficient in English as the English-speaking children not tested, become “LEPs” and are sent to remedial English programs. LEP is the abbreviation for Limited English Proficiency. But it’s hard to ignore the proximity of LEP with LEPER, because LEP tests treat contact with other languages like a disease requiring isolation in LEP colonies until one is cured and can rejoin the rest of society. Since LEPs are by definition kids who have knowledge of languages other than English, I have proposed reinterpreting the acronym to mean Linguistically Endowed Person (Pratt 2003). While LEP colonies do their language-killing work, the demand for people with advanced multilingual expertise is on the rise throughout labor markets in the US, and is urgent in many of them. Qualified teachers are in demand for many languages, in education and government. Multilingualism is a huge asset in job markets, when coupled with other kinds of education or expertise. So if you’re an LEP and you can make it out of the LEP colony without being cured of your “disease,” the linguistic knowledge that got you sent there in the first place might be a ticket to opportunity, especially if you’ve had a way to develop it. More mala fe.

I said there was a sequel to the story of Hilaria Supa, and it’s this: before long, Supa decided to abandon her pledge to speak only Quechua in the Congress, because she needed Spanish to forge the political alliances that legislative activity

requires. She returned to Spanish, I would argue, not as an imperial language, but as a geopolitical lingua franca. Where there is multilingualism, there will also be lingua francas, shared second languages that enable communication across linguistic difference. Where there is empire, the imperial power quickly ceases to own the imperial language, as English stopped belonging to England, and Spanish to Spain. Imperial languages tend to become the lingua francas of the dominated, through which, among other things, they demand justice or exploit the demise of empire. Lingua francas are languages that things get translated into in order to travel, languages that give access to distant worlds from anywhere. Spanish, for example, has been the crucial enabler of the pan-indigenous movement that crystallized in Latin America in the 1990s, of which Supa is a part. Making the case for multilingualism includes making the case for plurilingual nation-states, for the rights of minority languages, for access to justice, law, and education in the language or languages one knows. But the case for multilingualism includes access to a lingua franca, as a path to civic power, connection, and political alliance.

Responding to Santorum's Puerto Rico faux pas, Stephen Colbert quipped, "There is no such law [prescribing English for statehood], it just feels like there is" (Colbert 2012). Much of the time it does. But in the United States today, there is at least one domain where the state recognizes multilingualism as a given and responds with public investment. That domain is—it may surprise you—the court system. As it now stands, federal law in the US requires that linguistic difference not prevent access to justice. To receive federal funding, all US courts must provide free court interpretation as needed by defendants or the state in order for the justice system to carry out its work. In the last twenty years, the demand for these services has grown exponentially, putting enormous strains on local and state budgets and on staffs who must try to find qualified interpreters in whatever languages that are in play. The results are radically imperfect. Yet I am struck by the fact that, so far, this right has not been seriously questioned from any point on the political spectrum. Last year, in Allen County, Indiana, near Fort Wayne, 1150 court cases required interpreters—in Burmese, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, "Ethiopian" Kreyol, Korean, Laotian, MaiMai, Punjabi,

Somali, Swahili, Thai, Vietnamese, and others (Bogue 2012). Interpreters are paid \$50 per hour, and all-day testimony requires two people who can spell each other off. Nebraska is one of the 22 states that have recently passed draconian anti-immigrant laws, but its state law requires free interpretation services for civil as well as criminal court proceedings (Kelly 2012). Last year, it had 11,000 requests for courtroom interpreters in 70 languages.

It seems there's a blind spot in the blind spot: a place where the imperative to uphold law and administer justice trumps monolingual dogmatism. On March 8th 2012, a Justice Department ruling on access to public services in North Carolina in languages other than English was published in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese (Department of Justice 2012). In December 2011, HUD inaugurated live one-on-one interpretive services in 175 languages. "Access to government should not be determined by how well a person speaks English," said HUD's assistant secretary for fair housing (Gaona 2011). Last October, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo ordered free interpretation for public services in Spanish, Chinese, Italian, Russian, French, and Kreyol (Governor's Press Office 2011). As Colbert says, it doesn't feel like such things are happening in the United States today, but the fact that they are suggests a growing recognition that alongside a powerful lingua franca, multilingualism is a permanent, systemic aspect of how this society puts itself together. That's at least a place to start.

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¹ This was originally delivered as a keynote address at the symposium *Multilingual, 2.0?* in Tucson, AZ, April 2012.