‘No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed’: Discourses of Racism and Ideology in Pahrump, Nevada

RAYETTE MARTIN

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that language policies are reflections of and stimulants for racist language ideologies making language policies forms of institutionalized racism. Language ideologies are culturally specific beliefs about social and linguistic relations, which are influenced by political and moral interests. Since language ideologies are based on political and moral beliefs about the relationship between people and language, they allow for the formation of linguistic hierarchies. A linguistic hierarchical typology can and often does parallel discriminating racial hierarchies. An analysis of discourses surrounding Pahrump, Nevada’s “English Only” ordinance shows the complex relationship between language policies, ideologies, and racism.

Issues of language and its relation to national identity are currently being debated in the United States. Although linguistic debates have occurred in waves throughout U.S. history, they are often linked to times of increased immigration (Nunberg 1992). Increasing Latino immigration has spurred national debates about immigration reform and English as an official language. Discourses surrounding these national debates create and reinforce ideologies about other languages and associated cultures not only at the national level but at the local level as well.

This study of the English Only ordinance, passed in Pahrump, Nevada in November of 2006, illustrates how a small town reacted to a national increase in immigration without having experienced any increase in their own town. This study will also demonstrate the importance of looking at language ideologies through local level discourses because these discourses reflect and re-enforce national language ideologies surrounding debates of similar “English Only” policies nationwide. Lastly, it will uncover how local and national
language ideologies can be sources of conflict and covers for racist ideologies. Therefore, this paper will explore the relationships between language policy, ideology, and racism.

Language Ideology

For the purposes of this paper, I will use Judith Irvine’s definition of language ideology: “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (1989:255). The beliefs people have about language are inseparable from other elements in their lives such as their social experiences and religious beliefs. Language ideology is a powerful force in how large groups of people view linguistic differences. For example, why people support or oppose laws to make English the official language.

Language ideologies are a part of shared knowledge that is passed on as common sense. A consequence of the unquestionable nature of ideology is the naturalization of the dominant language group’s perspective and the reinforcing of stereotypes about those who speak other languages. Despite the variety of people who speak a language, like Spanish or English, these people are often regarded as members of homogeneous groups due to linguistic markers serving as indicators of social identity.

Dominant language groups (e.g. English in the United States) hold language ideologies that place their language in a position above others in a hierarchical typology, thus justifying any negative stereotypes about those who speak other nonstandard forms of language or other languages. These hierarchically ranked language associations are deeply rooted in peoples’ beliefs about others’ moral standing in society (Woolard 1998). This ideological hierarchy may also allow for linguistic discrimination when other forms of racial or ethnic discrimination are looked down upon (Woolard 1998).

The English Only ordinance passed in Pahrump made English the official language with the premise that it is not a discriminatory law but rather a way to discourage illegal immigration. The association between Spanish and illegal immigration is just one example of how political and economic issues are influenced by and incorporated into language ideologies. The connection further illustrates how the hierarchy of languages and their association with morality can lead to the justification of discriminatory action toward the minority.

Another danger lies in the fact that ideologies affect multiple aspects of our lives without many of us necessarily being aware of it. Language ideologies and their myths, motivations, and origins are not addressed when issues surrounding language policies arise. The belief that one’s ideology is an unquestionable truth and the accompanying inability to clearly and rationally explain why one has certain beliefs about language, clouds legal issues and is a source of miscommunication for all parties.
Speech Community or Community of Practice

When speaking about language ideologies and political and economic factors affecting them, it is important to understand how we assess who shares these ideologies. Linguistic anthropologists distinguish between various approaches of how to separate groups into analyzable units. Two useful approaches are the ‘speech community’ and the ‘community of practice.’

Many have interpreted the speech community, like other terms in linguistic anthropological theory, with subtle differences. In 1933, Leonard Bloomfield defined a speech community as “a group of people who use the same set of speech signals” (Morgan 2006:6). More recent theorists have expanded this simple definition. Irvine described a “…speech community as an organization of linguistic diversity, having a repertoire of ways of speaking that are indexically associated with social groups, roles, or activities” (1989:251). Marcyliena Morgan explained a ‘speech community’ as the “product of prolonged interaction among those who operate within shared belief and value systems regarding their own culture, society, and history as well as their communication with others” (2006:3). Regardless of the increasing inclusiveness of these definitions, a speech community largely remains defined by language. Latinos in general cannot be classified as a speech community due to the fact that not all Latinos speak Spanish; they are all just associated with it.

Despite their diversity, Latinos’ general association with Spanish has led to uniform discrimination towards them as a group. In order to examine the sources of linguistic discrimination in English Only policies, it is important to discuss Latinos shared experiences and responses to the policy while still acknowledging their diversity. Because a community of practice does not limit its membership to those within a shared language group but rather includes a multitude of resources for negotiating membership and recognizes the variation in levels of individual participation, Latinos will be discussed as a ‘community of practice’ (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999).

Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet define a ‘community of practice’ as “a group whose joint engagement in some activity or enterprise is sufficiently intensive to give rise over time to a repertoire of shared practices” (1999:185). They further explain a ‘community of practice’ as an “aggregate of people who, united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, and values, in short, practices (1999:186). In the context of the Pahrump English Only debate, Latinos are engaged in a joint negotiated enterprise through their struggle against discrimination. As Alonso Flores, adviser to the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, explained, “unity in Pahrump’s Hispanic community is the upside to all the controversy surrounding the ordinances…’The Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, Mexicans are all coming together’” (Bream December 14, 2006). This struggle has banded these different groups together as one community of practice. Members of a community of practice are able to identify and relate to each other through looking at the similarities and differences they have with other communities (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999). By acknowledging their differences communities become more
cohesive. According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, a “community of practice is not inward looking but shapes its participants’ relations both among themselves and with the rest of the world” (1999:186). A community of practice is constantly comparing itself against the backdrop of the ‘other’. In the case of the English Only ordinance in Pahrump, the Latino community of practice compares itself to the supporters of the ordinance.

Viewing Latinos as a community of practice will allow for a fluid discussion of how they assert their identities through either their use of or support for the maintenance of Spanish. It will also assist in analyzing how members of a language group are stereotyped and affected by similar political relationships with other communities of practice.

Methods

In order to evaluate discourses surrounding the English Only debate in Pahrump, I collected newspaper articles written in the local Pahrump Valley Times and Las Vegas’s Review-Journal from the time the ordinance was first reported on until after the ordinance passed. Analysis was conducted on the quotes from local residents as well as reported written discourse (writing that was quoted in the articles). I focused my analysis on overarching themes throughout the discourse. Quotes from those who opposed and supported the ordinance were evaluated.

The various drafts of the ordinance itself were also evaluated for themes and changes in language over time. These were compared with the quoted discourse surrounding the ordinance. Lastly, demographics were assessed for any indication of potential factors that could lead to the development and/or support of an English Only language policy.

Findings

Pahrump, Nevada

Pahrump, a small Nevada town with approximately 35,000 residents, is located about an hour’s drive outside of Las Vegas. Well known for its brothels and legalized prostitution, Pahrump is perceived as a town of individualism. Originally a small farming community, it has received a steady increase in residents. As home prices rose in Las Vegas, people started migrating there to take advantage of the less expensive housing and the availability of land.

Despite a steady increase in Latinos in the southwest, Pahrump has a surprisingly small Hispanic community in comparison to larger cities like Las Vegas (table 1).
over 90 percent of its population reporting as only White in the 2000 Census, Pahrump can be considered relatively homogeneous in racial composition.

It is also important to point out that of the 7.6 percent of residents who gave Hispanic or Latino as their race, 75 percent reported Mexican ancestry. In terms of language usage, of all the people who reported speaking Spanish at home (5.9 percent) only 2.1 percent of Pahrump’s Spanish speaking population reported speaking English less than “very well” (U.S. Census Bureau 2000b).

Table 1
Racial Categories, 2000 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Las Vegas</th>
<th>Pahrump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White (one race)</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The numbers represent percentages of population (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a).

Pahrump has not experienced the kind of influx of immigration that Las Vegas has felt. The projected increase in population for Pahrump, according to a report by the Nevada state demographer for the Nevada Small Business Development Center, will maintain close to current ratios of Hispanics to Whites. In 2006, when the English ordinance was proposed and passed, the estimates of the percentage of White not Hispanic was 86 percent and Hispanics were estimated to be only 9 percent, a small increase in numbers from the 2000 census data. The projections for the year 2010 showed that the number of Hispanics should remain at a constant 9 percent and Whites should decrease by only 1 percent (Hardcastle 2006). Overall, this statistical data shows that Pahrump, Nevada did not experience any major increase in Hispanic or Latino immigration nor should it in the near future.

Pahrump is also unique in its high percentage of civilian veterans. Pahrump is approximately 10 percent above the national average for civilian veterans. Although Pahrump scores below average on higher educational attainment, approximately 14 percent below the national average, it has a lower than average number of families living in poverty, approximately 2 percent below the national average (table 2). As I discuss below, the complex demographics of Pahrump are a factor in its development and support of the English Only ordinance.
Table 2
General Demographics, 2000 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Las Vegas</th>
<th>Pahrump</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Veterans</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals Below</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors Degree</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Higher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The numbers represent percentages of population (U.S. Census Bureau 2000a).

The Ordinance

The English Only ordinance was proposed by a town board member, in what he stated to CNN, was a response to the immigrant marches in May of 2006 (Navarrette 2006). The nationwide immigrant marches occurred in reaction to the proposed national immigration policies. In Las Vegas, Pahrump, and countrywide, businesses closed and supporters did not attend work or school in support of the protest. The first draft of the ordinance was proposed in August just three months after the marches. The ordinance included more than just restrictions on language within the town meetings and publications. It also placed restrictions on flying foreign flags. The photo shown below illustrates the flag flying section of the ordinance in which an American flag must accompany any foreign flag and must be displayed to the right or above the foreign flag. The ordinance also stated that employees of businesses in Pahrump must be able to converse in English with customers and businesses must not close in sympathy to any foreign person(s). Housing, loaning or giving money to illegal aliens or undocumented immigrants would be illegal. Any person who improperly flew a foreign flag, employed non-English speaking persons, closed a business in sympathy to any foreign person(s), or assisted illegal immigrants, would be subject to fines up to $500 a day and a possibility of 30 days in jail and 30 days of community service.

The final version, proposed in November, removed all restrictions but those on English in Pahrump’s town meetings and publications and flying of foreign flags. The penalty for improperly flying a foreign flag was reduced to $50 a day and up to 30 hours of community service. Although both versions of the ordinance included a section denying any town benefits to illegal immigrants, none were ever offered; therefore, that section of the ordinance is not discussed.
As soon as the ordinance was in its final stages, the Las Vegas Review-Journal started to report on this event. Headlines read: “Pahrump weighs ordinance: English would be official language,” “Pahrump targets illegal immigrants: Ordinance declares English town’s official language, limits flying foreign flags, denies benefits,” “With English-only ordinance, Pahrump succeeds … in wasting time,” “Pahrump meeting criticized,” and “Nye sheriff meets with Hispanics.” These articles were all written with a negative view of the ordinance. However, they also contained the voices of the residents that were in favor of the ordinance. The Pahrump Valley Times only had one article accessible online that discussed the ordinance titled “Some Support Evident: Debate focuses on ‘English’ ordinance.” This article only contained information in support of the ordinance.

Two major themes were found in the quoted discourse from the Review-Journal and Pahrump Valley Times articles. Those in favor of the ordinance usually expressed nationalist sentiments and those opposed argued the policies were racist. The same themes of racism and nationalism were found in reported written discourse. The reported writing was found on T-shirts, notes, and signs. However, all of the reported written discourse was from those in favor of the ordinance.

Many of the supporting nationalist quotes had militaristic qualities, which is reflective of the large civilian veteran population. One person argued the English Only policy was “for all the service men and women who died for our country” (Curtis November 15,
Along the same militaristic theme of nationality, another person claimed, “We are not going to give this land to people who just came across the border and invaded” (Brean December 13, 2006). These quotes equate the English Only policy with a duty to protect the nation. In no other quote was this sentiment as clear as when a resident associated the policy with the need to “protect the citizens and the borders of the United States” (Curtis November 16, 2006). In addition to equating the English Only policy with a need to secure the nation from the “other,” residents also related speaking Spanish with illegal activity: “illegal aliens were felons, and that the people were asking to give felons rights” (Pahrump Valley Times). In summary, the feelings expressed in the quotes of support indicate a belief that the ordinance is necessary to deter the immigration of Spanish speakers, all whom are associated with illegal activity and whom are unable to assimilate effectively into acceptable citizens.

The hostility towards Spanish speakers by those who supported the ordinance was also expressed in quoted written discourse. The most shocking was the sign in a local Pahrump restaurant that read: ‘No dogs or Mexicans allowed” (Curtis November 16, 2006). The equation of Mexicans with dogs is an overtly racist stance reminiscent of the discriminating remarks and signs during America’s civil rights movement. Another overtly hostile sign was on a T-shirt worn by a supporter during one of the public hearings that read: ‘Speak English or get the (expletive) out’ (Curtis November 15, 2006). While this shirt is not explicitly targeting Latinos, it is a sign of intolerance to difference and therefore can be considered discriminatory and racist. In addition to explicitly racist signs, a note was left for a Hispanic business owner that read: ‘Don’t bite the hand that feeds you’ (Curtis November 15, 2006). This quote illustrates the notion that Hispanics and Latinos are dependent upon the White English-speaking majority for economic security and handouts, making this a very degrading comment. In all, the reported written statements by supporters illustrate themes of discrimination, intolerance, and ultimately racism.

Those who opposed the ordinance responded with claims that the ordinance was fueled by racism (as illustrated in the quoted written discourse previously discussed). They expressed their feelings about supporters in quotes explaining the ordinance was a “cover for racists” (Brean December 7, 2006). An opponent also stated they were “appalled at the overt Hispano-phobia going on” (Curtis November 15, 2006). In addition to expressing their belief that supporters are racist, they were able to convey their fear of supporters by calling them “lynch mobs” (Curtis November 16, 2006). In another statement of fear, a resident explained, “Well, what would those people have done and who would they have taken their ire out on?” (Curtis November 16, 2006).

Overall, these expressions of fear and the acknowledgement of racism were in response to the statements and writings of the residents in support of the ordinance as well as in response to the realization of the restrictions and other consequences this ordinance would have on the Hispanic community. This realization can be seen in a statement about communication with and within the Hispanic community: “If this town has a community festival, you can’t distribute fliers in Spanish to a Hispanic neighborhood” (Curtis Novem-
ber 14, 2006). A reporter for the Review-Journal also pointed out a major consequence of the ordinance when he stated, the ordinance is “a political statement that divides a town and makes second class citizens out of Spanish-speaking residents, whether they live there legally or illegally” (Morrison November 16, 2006).

Discussion

The findings of this study both challenge and support the idea that language policies occur in response to an increase in immigration. Pahrump has not seen an increase in any minority population and is not projected to experience any influx in the future. However, Pahrump can be influenced by the media coverage of events related to immigration; for example, only being an hour away from Las Vegas, Pahrump experienced the May immigration marches. These kinds of experiences may have had enough of an effect on this small town to warrant a response in the form of a language policy.

Through an analysis of the discourses surrounding the English Only debate, this study also demonstrates that conflicting language ideologies are at the core of the conflict. As I will discuss further, the inability to resolve the language conflict is due to incompatible language ideologies. Those who oppose the ordinance equate language with the expression of ethnic identity while those who support the ordinance equate language with national identity.

Relationship Between Opposition and Ethnic Identity

One of the elements in the glue that holds some communities of practice together is the equation of language with identity. A Latino community member is often identified by his or her use of Spanish. Ethnographic studies have also shown that language is a major indicator of group membership. “Gilda Ochoa, in her recent study of the La Puente barrio in Los Angeles, argues that the Spanish language is one of the strongest solidarity symbols in the community” (Martinez 2006:55). The use of or association with a particular language or linguistic style is commonly used as a marker of ethnic identity.

The discourse of those opposed to the ordinance, including members of the Latino community, illustrates the ties between language ideology and ethnic identity. A Pahrump resident alludes to this sentiment in the statement, “If this town has a community festival, you can’t distribute fliers in Spanish to a Hispanic neighborhood” (Curtis November 14, 2006). This statement highlights not only identity through language use but also the consequences of an English Only policy in that it significantly disrupts or inhibits communication within a community. Ethnic identity can also be seen through the opposition to racism in the use of the term “Hispano-phobia” (Curtis November 15, 2006). The emphasis on the association between the language policy and racism is enhanced by the Latino community’s language ideology, which emphasizes ethnic identity through language use. Logi-
cally any policy that bans the use of a language would be banning the expression of ethnic identity and cultural heritage, making it a racist policy.

**Relationship Between Support and National Identity**

The quoted and written discourse from the supporters for the ordinance can be clearly linked to statements of nationalism including national identity; for example, “this is America and we speak English here” and the sign ‘Americans for America’ (Curtis November 15, 2006; Brean December 13, 2006). The quoted and written discourse also reveal the links between support for the ordinance and xenophobia with statements such as “bankrupting our nation by not controlling our borders, not to mention the danger of not knowing who is in our country” (Smith November 28, 2006). These statements are taken a step further and illustrate the hostility toward Spanish speakers in signs, notes, and T-shirt logos stating ‘No dogs or Mexicans allowed’; ‘Don’t bite the hand that feeds you”; ‘Speak English or get the (expletive) out’ (Curtis November 16, 2006; November 15, 2006). The equation of Spanish with non-Americanism and something to be feared and treated with disrespect stems from a common language ideology that equates English with nationalism and Spanish with illegal activity.

Woolard asserts, “It is a truism that the equation of language and nation is not a natural fact but rather a historical, ideological construct” (1998:16). It makes sense that national identity and language are being linked in our current political and economic times. We are a nation feeling threatened by the generalized ‘other’. In a time of the war against terrorism and a push to stop illegal immigration many are looking to find a unifying identity to compare and contrast against others. In a country built on immigration with the image of the “melting pot,” language is the one thing we can strive to unify and control. Because of our political economic current it is not surprising that language would be a major focus of our government and citizens. In the particular case of Pahrump, it is probable that the town’s large number of civilian veterans strengthens the support for nationalistic language ideology.

**Conflicting Ideologies**

The connection between language and nationalism is not unlike the equation of language and ethnic identity. Both are fueled by language ideologies, which reinforce ideas about the other. In this case, the ideology of the supporters equates the use of Spanish or non-English with a resistance to assimilate to the “American way” or to be non-American, whereas, the shared language ideology of those who oppose the ordinance equates language with ethnic identity and relates any policy against the use of a language with racism and general discrimination.

The different perspectives on the Pahrump English only ordinance represent two different language ideologies. The issue lies in the fact that language ideologies that support the equation of language and nationalism are solely focused on the assimilation of non-
English speakers to English. This inability to accept those with other linguistic expressions leads this ideology to support racism through the exclusion of the other. In contrast, the language ideology of those who equate language with ethnic identity does not discriminate or exclude others, rather it contains the idea that one can be an American and still be a member of an ethnic group. In this case, supporters believe that a Spanish speaking Latino can be just as American as an English speaking Caucasian.

Language, Power, and Racism

Debates about official languages are often related to power differentials between speakers of different dialects or languages. As Suzanne Romaine put it, “Usually the more powerful groups in any society are able to force their language on the less powerful” (1995:23). In Pahrump, people who voted in favor of the English Only ordinance were asserting power over those who chose not to or who could not speak English.

People often argue the reason for having one official language is due to the need to unify communication within a political territory; however, this is a false assumption (Bourdieu 1991). Pierre Bourdieu states:

> Political unification and the accompanying imposition of an official language establish relations between the different uses of the same language which differ fundamentally from the theoretical relations … between different languages, spoken by politically and economically independent groups. All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, i.e. the practices of those who are dominant [1991:53].

According to Bourdieu, the driving force behind enforcing an official language is not communication within a political territory but rather to create a relationship of linguistic and social subordination and dominance.

Symbolic domination is a consequence of and a motivating force in language policy. Bourdieu states, “All symbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values” (1991:50-1). Therefore, just because most people submit to the dominant language does not mean they necessarily explicitly agree with their position of subordination. Language choice is tied to many external and internal factors. It is not an arbitrary phenomenon connected to human social existence. Rather, language is an active force capable of shaping social, political, and economic relationships (Bourdieu 1991).

Language has social value. This social value is based on the language’s relationship with other languages. These different languages are placed on a “hierarchy of styles which express the hierarchy of corresponding social groups” (Bourdieu 1991:54). The place in which a language falls on the hierarchy, as constructed by the dominant language group, determines within which domains the lesser language will be spoken without repercussions. For example, Bonnie Urcuioli points out, “The central political difference between the spheres of Spanish and English is that the intimate world rarely excludes Eng-
lish altogether, while the sphere of hegemonic English almost totally excludes Spanish” (1991:301). Therefore, the value of Spanish is higher in the home than out of the home, whereas, English is valued in both places.

In the first section of Pahrump’s English Only ordinance, it states: “The town of Pahrump is comprised of individuals from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, and continues to benefit from this rich diversity. Throughout the history of the United States, the common thread binding individuals of different backgrounds has been the English language” (City of Pahrump 2006). In section two, it takes this idea of language solidarity a step further arguing, “In order to encourage every citizen of this town to become more proficient in the English language, thereby facilitating participation in the economic, political, and cultural activities of this town, this state, and of the United States, the English language is hereby declared to be the official language of the Town of Pahrump” (City of Pahrump 2006). According to Bourdieu (1991), the knowledge of the dominant official language may not be enough to gain access to the valuable commodity of communication. Just because others may be able to understand what a speaker is saying does not mean what they say is adequate enough to be listened to or deemed as an acceptable use of the language in different contexts.

As Bourdieu and others have illustrated, there is a relationship between language, power, and discrimination. These relationships are seen in Pahrump’s English Only ordinance. Not only does Pahrump’s policy discriminate against Spanish and other non-English speakers through the exclusion of their language, the policy reinforces stereotypes based on a linguistic hierarchy of typologies that places English above all other languages. This exclusion in combination with ideas of superiority makes this English Only policy and others like it a form of linguistic discrimination. Due to the fact that Hispanics and Latinos are identified by their association with Spanish, the linguistic discrimination that English Only policies enforce are also forms of racial discrimination.

A little over a year after the English Only ordinance passed, it was repealed by a unanimous vote. The power structures in Pahrump had changed. The city board changed members; reports of opposition were continuing to make headlines; and local and national groups continued to respond to the ordinance. For example: the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) opened a local chapter in Pahrump; the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada threatened to file a lawsuit; the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o De Aztlan (M.E.Ch.A.), a student organization, held protests at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. After city board review, the ordinance was deemed of questionable constitutionality. The repeal went into effect on February 13, 2007 (City of Pahrump 2007). Some residents believe “the repeal indicates that most people in Pahrump do not support measures that target immigrants” (Brean February 14, 2007). However true, the simplistic idea that language debates are solely based on ideas held by the majority ignores the power maintained by dominant language ideologies.
Conclusions

Linguistic and racial discrimination, including forms of exclusion and the expression of ideas of superiority, are based on a nationalistic language ideology that has been expressed in English Only policies not only in Pahrump but nationwide. Laws declaring English the official language were recently passed in towns in Texas and the state of Arizona (Curtis November 15, 2006). These policies are not isolated to the southwest. Similar policies were also passed in Maryland and Tennessee (KARE 11.com 2007).

Although not always specifically addressed, the focuses of discourses surrounding language policy debates are racism and nationalism. It is well known that certain language ideologies create as well as disguise racist discourse. However, as researchers our focus should be on understanding the language ideologies of each group. The most significant finding in this study is that neither side of the debate will fully understand how to overcome the objections of the other because their ideologies are incompatible. The incompatibility stems from the naturalized beliefs that are the essence of language ideologies. Those who equate language with national identity will not accept the opinion of those who equate language with ethnic identity and vice versa. Without the further dispelling of myths created by these ideologies, language policies will continue to be sources for discrimination and forms of institutionalized racism.

References

Bourdieu, Pierre

Brean, Henry

City of Pahrump

Curtis, Lynnette
Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnell-Ginet

Hardcastle, Jeff

Holmes, Janet and Miriam Meyerhoff

Irvine, Judith T.

KARE 11.com

Kroskrity, Paul V. ed.

Martinez, Glenn A.

Morgan, Marcyliena

Morrison, Jane Ann

Mower, Lawrence

Navarrette, Ruben Jr.

Nunberg, Geoffrey

Pahrump Valley Times
Romaine, Suzanne

Smith, John L.

U.S. Census Bureau
2000a Summary File 1 (SF 1) and Summary File 3 (SF 3).

Urciuoli, Bonnie

Woolard, Kathryn A.

Author contact information:
Rayette Martin
Anthropology and Ethnic Studies Department
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4505 Maryland Parkway Box 45503
Las Vegas, Nevada, United States
89153-5003
martinr6@unlv.nevada.edu

vis-à-vis is online at vav.library.utoronto.ca