

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the master's Thesis

Interpreting for the Colombian Indigenous communities

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2022 / Vienna, 2022

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree program code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 070 351 331

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree program as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Translation Spanisch Deutsch

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Franz Pöchlhammer

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0. Introduction

Latin America is home to more than 550 different Indigenous languages, which makes it one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse regions of the world (López 2014:19). In Colombia alone, 65 Indigenous languages are spoken by more than 400.000 people and these languages coexist in the country alongside Spanish, Palenque Creole, San Andrés Creole, Romani, and Colombian Sign Language (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia 2015). The State of Colombia is thus confronted with a multilingual society and therefore faces the challenge of determining a language and translation policy to secure the linguistic rights of all its citizens (Meylaerts 2011:744). However, the critical role of translation and interpreting as part of language policy has been mostly overlooked (Meylaerts 2011:745), especially regarding Latin America, and remains a new field of study (Howard et al. 2018:23). The aim of this master's thesis is to provide a comprehensive view of Colombia's language and translation policy, as well as its implementation.

This subject matter, however, encompasses many different fields of study, with language and translation policy being only the outermost layer in a complex web of concepts and historical circumstances. It is therefore key to not only define and explain the theoretical background, but also to understand how these concepts relate to one another and, more importantly, how such a theoretical basis can be used to analyze the dynamics of a country such as Colombia.

To do so, this paper will first explore the topic of policies in general, more specifically the fields of language policy, language rights and translation policy. Building on that theoretical foundation, in the second chapter, Indigenous peoples and their languages will be explored, in particular those in Latin America. This chapter will provide a broad overview of Indigenous peoples and their languages, followed by a review of the historical context of Indigenous languages in Latin America and the translation policy regarding them throughout history. Finally, this second chapter will delve into a review of current international resolutions regarding both Indigenous peoples and their languages. Likewise, this paper will discuss the postcolonial power dynamics and colonial ideologies that are still in place and that influence the language policies regarding Indigenous languages. This is a crucial discussion that must be held when writing about Indigenous languages, since these dynamics and ideologies permeate not only

the way the languages are handled, but also the lens through which the topic is viewed and talked about.

On the other hand, the third chapter will be dedicated entirely to Colombia. The specifics of the country and its Indigenous peoples will be broadly described, highlighting special features that are important to the subject matter of this master's thesis. Then, the official position of the Colombian State towards Indigenous languages will be described, while simultaneously being compared to previous work examining language policy in the country. Regarding the comparison between the official and the perceived language and translation policy, it is important to note that very little research has been done in relation to this topic, making such a comparison important but somewhat incomplete in its scope. Therefore, qualitative interviews with members of the Indigenous community will be presented, enquiring about their perspective regarding the translation and language policy of Colombia. This approach will not only shift the frame of the discussion, but it will also provide a current perspective on the policies in place, making it a good contrasting point to the official stance found in the law.

The interviews were conducted online in April 2022, with members of the Misak community in the Cauca department of Colombia. An account of the Misak will be provided in Chapter three, giving insight into their specific context and exploring their unique linguistic and political circumstances. Subsequently, Chapter four will begin by elaborating on the method used for the interviews and their analysis, followed by a brief description of the whole interview process and the interviewees. This chapter will then explore the information gleaned from the interviews, making it central to the question of policy implementation in Colombia.

Lastly, Chapter five will strive to synthesize Colombia's language and translation policy regarding Indigenous languages, giving a clear picture of its implementation as well as its challenges. However, the conclusions drawn from the thesis are necessarily limited in scope, pertaining only to a small part of a very diverse and heterogeneous Indigenous community. This paper could thus prove to be a stepping-stone towards a more complete analysis of interpreting for the Colombian Indigenous communities.

1. Policies

One of the many tasks ascribed to governments and states is that of ensuring a functioning society within said state's territory. To do so, decisions must be made and such decision-making may lead to the need to publicly intervene, and this response is what Córdoba Serrano & Díaz Fouce (2018:5) describe as a public policy. Since language and communication play a crucial role in our societies, it stands to reason that they are a matter of public policy as well, not only in terms of the coexistence of languages within the territory but also regarding translation. The first major topic covered by this paper is therefore the policies regarding language and translation, which go beyond any specific state and can arguably be applied universally.

1.1. Language policy

Language and communication are undoubtedly an important part of any given state, considering they must communicate somehow if they are to function and articulate their power. The language(s) endorsed by the state, either consciously or not, thus become a matter of public policy and are an inevitable aspect of it (Rubio-Marín 2003:52-53). Indeed, a state without a language policy would essentially be a state without a language. However, the existence of a language policy does not instantaneously mean that said policy is explicitly stated.

As Spolsky (2004) argues, a language policy does not necessarily need an authority to be established and it could be implicit instead, to be seen only when analyzing the way language is used. Moreover, a language policy is not restricted to the political arena and “may refer to all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity” (2004:9). In this sense, language policy applies to each and every area where language is used and it is determined by linguistic *choices*, either at an individual or at a general level. Spolsky also notes that such choices tend to evolve without much official enforcement, changing organically according to the decisions being made. Furthermore, these decisions are influenced by other non-linguistic factors and should therefore be understood as being part of dynamic contexts (2004:6-13).

Within this framework, language policy is not permanent or immutable, but rather malleable and subject to changes. Changes made to an explicit policy will, accordingly, be made

explicitly, whereas changes to an implicit one will be reflected in language use but there is no way to verify whether the policy was effectively changed or not. Certainly, without an explicit policy, it may be hard to even reach a consensus regarding what the policy truly is (Spolsky 2004:39). In that sense, for a state to actively try to change or introduce a language policy, it would have to do so explicitly, since an implicit policy would neither be truly known, nor would it be set up by an overseeing authority. But even so, explicit language policies do not always reflect the real use of language and an imposed official policy could also clash with current language practices (2004:14). Indeed, members of a community are not always swayed by explicit policies when these are not implemented, nor is their implementation always successful (2004:11). For language policy surely belongs to a complex and dynamic context, which should be taken into consideration if said policy is supposed to be altered satisfactorily.

Nevertheless, the dichotomy between explicit and implicit policies is not the only dimension of language policy. According to Córdoba Serrano & Diaz Fouce (2018:5), multilingualism within a territory, followed by a subsequent subordination and hierarchization of languages, lead to a potential source of conflict, and language policy is fundamental in dealing with said conflict. Even in *apparently* monolingual territories, multilingualism is embedded in the discourse around language because speaking one language, and one language only, means not speaking another one, which is to say that by including one, the rest are being excluded. The way a state deals with multilingualism is then not to be overlooked, as it goes well beyond linguistic choices and veers into the territory of the next topic discussed on this paper, namely language rights.

1.2. Language rights

The world we live in is both multilingual and multicultural, with hundreds of languages spread across the globe. In such a linguistically diverse world, it is not surprising that languages co-exist within certain territories, which in turn raises the question of how these languages are distributed, or in other words, who is speaking them. This question is a challenging one, since not all languages have the same number of speakers and, as established in the last section, a state sets its language policy by endorsing the use of a language. This invariably leads to a language being dominant over the rest, either because it is the language of the majority, the state-endorsed common language, or both. As a result, languages can also be categorized in

terms of majority and minority languages, and as González Núñez (2013:405-406) notes, this means that more thought has been given to language rights as part of minorities' rights. In this way, language rights are closely tied to minority languages, the latter being a broadly discussed concept among scholars (Córdoba Serrano & Diaz Fouce 2018:1). At first glance, the term "minority language" might sound self-evident but in truth, as a concept, it can be tackled from different angles, and the way in which it is framed can be used to emphasize different aspects of it. In exploring language rights, it is necessary to first understand what is meant by minorities in terms of language and so do understand the link between minority languages and minorities in general.

1.2.1. Minority languages

Córdoba Serrano & Diaz Fouce (2018) explain that, when talking about a minority language, the term is mainly used to signify and emphasize one of two options. First, it can be used as a way to emphasize the language itself, and the quantity of speakers gives it its status as minority. The second definition is focused on the group of individuals speaking the language, with language being only one characteristic of the group. Both definitions are complementary, but when applied to real-life examples, they fail to account for more specific circumstances. For example, Córdoba Serrano & Diaz Fouce mention several ways of classifying minority languages that range from classifying some languages as absolute minorities, to classifying them as minorities within minorities. Indeed, they could be classified according to geographical and geopolitical circumstances or according to whether or not they can be considered autochthonous languages, just to name a few more examples. This illustrates the wide scope of situations where the term "minority language" could be applied, and consequently a language could meet the requirements to be a minority language according to one metric but not necessarily all of them (2018:1-4).

However, the consequences of being recognized as a minority language are far from trivial, as linguistic rights depend upon said recognition to be granted (Córdoba Serrano & Diaz Fouce 2018:3). Those rights concern the right of translation, as will be discussed later in this paper, but they also allow members of a linguistic community to use their own language without interference both privately and publicly, among others (González Núñez 2013:406). Therefore, recognizing a minority language as such grants its speakers some rights that could otherwise be denied to them, and seeing that "[m]ost national minorities are simultaneously

linguistic minorities” (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1995:75), granting them language rights is another step towards ensuring they are adequately protected (Rubio-Marín 2003:58).

Admittedly, the term minority itself warrants a closer inspection if it is to be discussed alongside language. Kymlicka (2008) explains that most Western democracies differentiate between two types of minorities, with different rights being guaranteed to each group. On the one hand, new minorities are considered newcomers to a country, only arriving after the country gained its independence and expected to be *integrated* into the country. On the other hand, old minorities are those that have historically settled in the territory and hence consider it their homeland. In contrast to new minorities, measures are taken to *accommodate* old minorities and they are given rights over their territory, their self-government, and their language. According to Kymlicka, this dichotomy between *integration* and *accommodation* has extensive implications in terms of the language and legal rights accorded to old and new minorities and is not useful in dealing with them fairly (2008:7-16).

The fact remains that both old and new minorities find themselves in a country where there is a dominant majority they do not belong to. For this reason, their needs in terms of communication are not dissimilar, and so language rights can be framed as rights that should help overcome the linguistic obstacles that result from the unavoidable language policy of a state (Rubio-Marín 2003:53). In other words, language rights work as a tool of communication between linguistic minorities and states communicating in the dominant language. Another perspective offered by Rubio-Marín is that they are “acts of cultural defence against the eroding impact of an economically and/or political dominant language, the majority language that is endorsed by the state” (2003:53). Likewise, language rights can also be seen as tools towards obtaining other rights, and these will be further explored in the next section.

1.2.2. Instrumental and non-instrumental rights

When exploring the subject of language rights, Rubio-Marín (2003) proposes a distinction between instrumental and non-instrumental language rights as a tool for approaching the topic. The main difference between them lies in the interests behind the claim of language rights. Whereas instrumental rights help overcome linguistic obstacles, non-instrumental rights are concerned with language and cultural identity. However, as Rubio-Marín notes, this distinction does not mean that instrumental and non-instrumental rights are mutually exclusive, but rather that they serve a different purpose, even if the rights themselves are the same. This is relevant

in terms of policy making, as “clarity on the rationale upon which the different language claims are based is still important for deciding which rights to recognize and, presumably, who should be accorded them” (2003:67). What then are the characteristics and main concerns behind both instrumental and non-instrumental rights? (2003:56-68).

To begin, the main idea behind instrumental rights is that a person’s language should not represent a liability in the enjoyment of their non-linguistic rights (Rubio-Marín 2003). Notably, they are to be understood as an instrument, hence the name, needed to fulfill a right that relies on comprehensible communication. In more practical terms, instrumental rights come into play whenever non-linguistic rights depend on communication. For instance, the right to a fair trial can hardly be fulfilled if both parties are unable to communicate, or the right to education cannot really be enforced without interactions with a minimal level of comprehension. Both examples are far from being the only situations where a language barrier impedes access to a given right, although the idea of language being an obstacle can also be applied to a more abstract level (2003:63-65).

According to Rubio-Marín (2003), “the first and foremost instrumental language right should be the right not to be discriminated against because of one’s language or accent” (2003:63). Certainly, some languages or accents can be the target of stigmatization and generalized prejudice, either because they are attached to a low status or because speaking the dominant language poorly is looked down upon. Such a systematic form of discrimination eventually curtails the freedoms, rights, and opportunities a person has access to, and thus becomes a liability and a linguistic obstacle (2003:63-64).

In summary, instrumental language rights enable the fulfillment of non-linguistic rights and help overcome other sorts of linguistic obstacles as well. Their strength is derived from the non-linguistic right they are trying to support, as they are but instruments used to achieve a goal (Rubio-Marín 2003). Nonetheless, it could be argued that facilitating the learning of the dominant language would be a better way of addressing the concerns behind many instrumental language rights claims. Being proficient in the dominant language would clearly eliminate most communication obstacles and therein lies the main difference between instrumental and non-instrumental language rights. Indeed, non-instrumental language rights are not particularly concerned with communication but rather with the cultural aspect of language (2003:56-74).

Rubio-Marín (2003) argues that non-instrumental language rights are essentially a protection for minorities, at both the linguistic and the cultural level. In view of this, they grant protection against the power of the dominant majority, effectively allowing speakers of a minority language to retain their tongue and their cultural identity in all spheres of their lives. Thus, non-instrumental rights are always group rights, as they protect a cultural identity by allowing the whole community to thrive in its own shared language. This sense of community behind non-instrumental rights highlights yet again how instrumental and non-instrumental rights have a different purpose, since the former focuses on the rights of an individual, like the right to a fair trial, and the latter's main goal is to protect the linguistic minority (2003:57).

Rubio-Marín (2003) mentions three types of non-instrumental rights. The first one deals with the way in which a state and its institutions accommodate language minorities, both practically and symbolically. A common example would be granting a minority language the status of official language alongside the dominant one, or also granting the right to interact with the authorities in the non-dominant language. The second type of non-instrumental rights refers to a minority's power of self-government to protect its own language. The example cited by Rubio-Marín is the francophone part of Canada, which has the power to formulate its own language policy and decide by itself how best to protect the cultural identity of the French speaking minority. The third and last non-instrumental language right consists of promotional rights, meant to promote the minority language, and not simply accommodate it. This third type of right helps minorities fight against the pressure to assimilate, but as a right it depends on the state's general views about minorities, specifically social power differences and the importance of protecting minority languages (2003:58-59).

All in all, the rights described above are "rights that protect minorities from the majority's political and economic power and the subsequent external pressure to assimilate" (Rubio-Marín 2003:59-60). As such, they do not maintain the cultural hegemony of a group, nor do they guarantee the survival of a minority language. In fact, many states that include language rights as part of their goals often do so rhetorically, or apply them only to some, and not all, linguistic minorities. Moreover, if linguistic diversity is seen as a problem and not as an asset, fully granting instrumental and non-instrumental rights might not always be feasible, not only in economic terms but also in terms of nation-building or political processes (2003:60-62).

To be sure, there is an interesting discussion to be held regarding whether linguistic diversity and multilingualism always represent the most desirable and attainable outcome. Such

a discussion exceeds the scope of this paper, but it is surely worth mentioning, since it could shed light on the topics being explored here. Likewise, embracing or denying linguistic diversity has a real effect that is felt by minority language speakers and as such, reaches beyond theoretical musings and into everyday practices. The next section of this paper will go into more detail, exploring the way in which language is tied to human rights and better exemplifying the relationship between majority and minority language speakers.

1.2.3. Linguistic Human Rights

As illustrated by its name, linguistic human rights (LHRs) are those human rights that intersect with language rights. Skutnabb-Kangas (2005) distinguishes language rights in the general sense from LHRs, by clarifying that the only rights belonging to the LHR category are those that are needed to, first, give people a dignified life and cover their basic needs, and second, are so fundamental that they are not supposed to be violated. This category, however, is far from being complete and there is no consensus regarding the reach of LHRs (2005:273-274). Despite that fact, when analyzing human rights through a language lens, it is possible to see how they interact and to understand how language is deeply ingrained in other rights.

To begin with, Skutnabb-Kangas describes language as “one of the most important of those human characteristics on the basis of which people are not supposed to be discriminated against” (2005:275). Not only that, but one of the fundamental principles of human rights law is the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of language and ethnicity, among others (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010:22). Yet language plays an important part in the process of creating hierarchies within society, while simultaneously reproducing and maintaining existing power relations (2010:40). Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1989:456) elaborate further and explain that since biological differences are no longer used as means to legitimize hierarchies and power structures, language and culture have now taken their place. In doing so, instead of appearing as biologically argued racism, discrimination takes place as a linguistically argued position, referred to as *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010:41).

According to Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995), *linguicism* is both ideological and structural, and it results in an unequal distribution of power and resources. What follows is that even though all languages have the same potential and linguistic worth, the power relations reproduced by *linguicism* skew the scale towards valuing some languages more than others (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989:455). Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995) expand on this and mention that, as is the case with strategies that reproduce racism, *linguicism* allows for

the glorification of the majority language and subsequent stigmatization of the minority. Furthermore, the relationship between majorities and minorities is framed and rationalized as one where “[t]he majorities ‘help’, ‘support’, ‘modernize’, ‘civilize’, ‘aid’ and ‘integrate’ the minorities – and work hard to accord them rights” (1995:106). This attempt at rationalization naturalizes the hegemonic structure and ultimately determines which languages are worthy of rights and which are not (1995:105-106). In such a context, the right to live a dignified life cannot be guaranteed and, hence, LHRs can fill that void (Skutnabb-Kangas 2005:277).

There is a myriad of other circumstances where the notion of linguisticism could be applied to determine whether discrimination is taking place on those grounds or not. Admittedly, not all types of discrimination take place based on language but an unconscious bias towards linguisticism can also manifest in ways that contradict human rights other than the right not to be discriminated against.

For instance, Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (1995:71) give as an example the right to identify with a mother tongue and have access to education and public services in said language. In this context, the term mother tongue is defined by Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson as “the language(s) one has learned first and identifies with” (1989:455). Their definition is relevant because a person might have different mother tongues depending on the criteria used to define it, and the way in which it is defined can have consequences for minority language speakers (1989:455). In the specific case of the right to education, minority language speakers can either be taught in their mother tongue or in the dominant language, the former being one of the most important LHRs that minorities could be granted (Skutnabb-Kangas 2005:275). Notably, it ensures that by receiving education in their mother tongue, children will not displace it in favor of the dominant language, as would likely be the case if they received education in the majority language only (2005:277).

Essentially, the aim of LHRs in the context of education should allow minorities to retain their language and culture and not be assimilated into the majority (Skutnabb-Kangas 2005:282). This perspective is closely aligned to that of non-instrumental rights, and yet LHRs could also be seen as instrumental, as is the case with linguisticism and discrimination. Whichever approach one takes, it is also worth noting that LHRs are self-explanatory rights to the majority, as their language is both openly and subtly promoted (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson 1989:458). It is thus very easy to speakers of dominant languages not to be aware of the impact language rights and language policy have on others. Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson succinctly

say that “[m]embers of dominant groups need to become aware of how linguisticism operates to their advantage, and how cruder forms of coercion have been replaced by more subtle forms” (1989:472).

Nonetheless, this lack of awareness has not prevented some language rights from being granted at the international level. While it is true that said laws tend to be vague and could be approached in a minimalist way, there is at least a legal framework around minorities (Skutnabb-Kangas 2005:276). At the level of international law, one of the most commonly used tools to provide language rights is translation (González Núñez 2013:407), and so the next section of this paper will cover translation policy and how it interacts with both language policy and language rights.

1.3. Translation policy

Now that the concepts of language policy and language rights have been explored, it is easier to see the role translation plays regarding both of those topics. For instance, while discussing language policy at the beginning of this paper, it became clear how a language policy is unavoidable, but little was said about translation. Meylaerts (2011) argues that in fact there is not a language policy without a parallel translation policy, seeing that “determining the rules of language use presupposes determining the right to translation within a democratic society” (2011:744). In view of that, to talk about one policy means to implicitly talk about the other one, as they both belong to the same continuum of language use.

Along those lines, the way in which a language policy deals with multilingualism will also affect how a translation policy approaches the issue. Córdoba Serrano & Díaz Fouce (2018) classify translation policies into two general categories, namely those that see language as a problem and those that see language as a right. In the language-as-problem approach, translation is a temporary measure meant to help correct the problem of linguistic diversity. Moreover, under this approach translation is not thought of as a right in itself, but it is rather considered to be a form of justice for those that do not speak the dominant language *yet* (2018:6-8). In this sense, this approach reflects the perspective of instrumental language rights and, in theory, applies only when the minority is not proficient in the dominant language.

The second approach, by contrast, mirrors the non-instrumental language rights and recognizes “the right to use one’s language, even as a minority, in public life, and to not be discriminated against for that reason” (Córdoba Serrano & Diaz Fouce 2018:10). Under this approach, translation and interpreting services do not rely on proficiency and language knowledge to be offered, and instead give minorities the possibility of using their language in all aspects of their lives (2018:10). Both approaches are clear parallels of instrumental and non-instrumental language rights, but they are not the only way to categorize translation policy.

An alternative classification is the one offered by Meylaerts (2011), where the approaches are divided into four prototypical translational regimes. The first one refers to “*complete institutional multilingualism with obligatory multidirectional translation in all languages for all*” (2011:746). This first regime allows for monolingualism at an individual level while the institutions are totally multilingual. In such a regime, all languages are treated equally, albeit with the downside that it can only apply to a finite set of languages to be manageable, and it entails very high costs. A well-known example of this regime is the EU, with the caveat that only official languages are included and translated into (2011:745-747).

The second regime stands in stark contrast to the first one, as it consists of “complete institutional monolingualism” (Meylaerts 2011:747). This regime allows only one institutional language and does not accommodate any other language in the public sphere. Paradoxically, such a regime makes translation and interpreting into the dominant language a necessity, since no other languages are used in the interaction with institutions. Nevertheless, Meylaerts clarifies that in practice, most states opt for a third regime of “institutional monolingualism combined with occasional (and often temporary) translation” (2011:747-750).

This regime maintains the idea of monolingual institutions, but grants translation and interpreting rights under well-defined, limited circumstances (Meylaerts 2011). Akin to the language-as-problem approach, this regime sees translation as a temporary aid that cannot replace learning the dominant language, and often seems to be a set of ad hoc practices and not a premeditated policy. The fourth and last regime mentioned by Meylaerts is “institutional monolingualism at the local level and institutional multilingualism with multidirectional mandatory translation at the superior (e.g., federal) level” (2011:752). This regime is a combination of the first two and it supports monolingualism in a local, almost individual level, while at a higher level, all monolingual institutions communicate multilingually with one another (2011:750-752).

Certainly, both categories of translation policy offer different and yet complementary perspectives on the question of how states deal with multilingualism. For example, it could be argued that the first regime is an expression of the language-as-right approach whereas the third regime is one and the same language-as-problem approach. Whichever method of classification is used, though, the underlying premise behind all of them is that translation and interpreting are used as a way of securing language rights. According to González Núñez (2013:407), the international community sees translation as a means towards granting instrumental language rights, and there are international laws concerning them. Admittedly, many states concede only the most basic translation and interpreting services to comply with international law, focusing on fairness during legal proceedings and not minority integration (2013:416). But despite that minimalistic approach, some form of interpreting and translation is still highlighted internationally as a way of securing rights, even if non-instrumental rights are overlooked.

This seems to suggest that many states favor a language-as-problem approach and gravitate towards the third regime, providing interpreting and translation services only when absolutely necessary. In this fashion, speakers of minority languages cannot actively participate in the public sphere and do not have access to the same rights and opportunities majority speakers have. Furthermore, this approach rests upon the assumption that minority language speakers will eventually learn the majority language, but that is certainly not a given (González Núñez 2016). Even so, translation and interpreting have the potential to enable more than instrumental language rights and can do more than just enabling communication. González Núñez refers to the scope of translation as being only a tool to guarantee communication at first, to later become a way to allow equal participation and to recognize the value of the minority language and its speakers, to finally being a tool for recognizing the minority (2016:10-12).

The field of translation policy in connection to language policy has not received a lot of attention, however, and as a field it can be widely enriched, both in terms of historical and contemporary research (Meylaerts 2018). Moreover, translation policies play a significant role in communication between authorities and people, and, in that sense, better understanding the topic can have an impact in more areas than just translation studies (2018:223-225). To be sure, the debate encompasses many disciplines and translation studies offer but one perspective out of many. A more thorough discussion, albeit interesting, would exceed the scope of this paper but further chapters will provide a more in-depth review of language policy, language rights, and translation policy in relation to Indigenous languages and Indigenous communities.

2. Indigenous languages

The previous chapter provided a general overview of the relationship between policy and language. Nonetheless, discussing policy and language outside of a specific context fails to account for the subtleties of each individual case, as language cannot be seen as a separate entity from its speakers and therefore does not exist in a vacuum. The following section of this paper will therefore explore the context of Indigenous peoples and their languages, offering both a historical and a contemporary perspective. It will also strive to offer a nuanced viewpoint, acknowledging the biases and preconceived notions that often accompany the topic.

2.1. Indigenous peoples

So far, Indigenous peoples and their languages have been mentioned as the focus of this paper, but little light has been shed on the matter of who the Indigenous peoples are. Kymlicka (2008) offers a succinct yet oversimplified view by writing that “the term “indigenous peoples” arose primarily in the context of New World settler states and refers to the descendants of the original non-European inhabitants of lands colonized and settled by European powers” (2008:8). This definition provides a quite literal description of who Indigenous peoples are, but while it is useful in its conciseness, it fails to account for the discourse around Indigenous peoples. This is by no means trivial, as the discourse around the topic shapes the attitude towards Indigenous peoples and, consequently, the public policies regarding them. For the purpose of this paper, it is then necessary to go beyond a literal definition of ancestry and also look into the historical circumstances and the ideology that permeate the topic.

To begin, the definition given by Kymlicka can be complemented by Albó’s (2009) assertion that a key aspect of Indigenous peoples is the idea of there being a continuity between Indigenous communities today and the inhabitants of a given area before a process of colonization. This continuity does not necessarily have to be physical, but it can also apply on a cultural or institutional level. Nonetheless, discerning what is and what is not considered Indigenous poses many challenges, which makes it daunting to externally decide where continuity has taken place. Indeed, a preferable way of defining a group as Indigenous is if they identify themselves as such (2009:983).

This approach, however, is no less challenging. As was explained in the previous chapter, differently categorized minorities are guaranteed different rights and “all homeland minorities have an overwhelming incentive to define, or redefine, themselves as indigenous peoples.” (Kymlicka 2008:16). Kymlicka (2008) elaborates on this point and explains that the rights accorded to non-Indigenous homeland minorities are deemed insufficient by them, as they often fail to include territorial or self-governing claims. On the other hand, Indigenous peoples do have rights protecting those claims and hence, being considered Indigenous would allow old minorities to have rights more suited to their interests. Minorities thus have a motivation to label themselves as Indigenous, but it is still unclear which criteria must be met to validate that claim i.e., a minority may be considered Indigenous under one definition but not another (2008:7-18).

In view of this, it appears that there is no single way to define Indigenous peoples. A combination of different degrees of ancestry, continuity, and self-determination seems to paint the most complete picture, and yet such a definition strips the term of its ideological and historical connotations. Because it is no coincidence that the term first arose in the context of European settler states, as colonizers searched for ways to describe the people they were encountering and needed to label them in a way that would justify their actions (López 2009:21). The nature of this label was far from neutral, as it codified their differences under the idea of race, “a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others.” (Quijano 2000:533). Quijano (2000) further explains that this new model of classification granted legitimacy to the relations of colonial domination that were being imposed, insofar as new hierarchical identities were being created, distributing the population into a seemingly natural structure of both physical and cultural inferiority (2000:534-535).

Within that framework, it is hardly surprising that the colonialist endeavor and its settler states were based around the replacement of native societies, intending to take the land and either eliminate or assimilate its inhabitants (Wolfe 1999:1-2). The reason was ultimately to *civilize* those deemed inferior, by bringing them the supposedly more civilized industrial and urban structures of modernity (Kymlicka 2008:9). In doing so, Quijano (2000) argues that European colonizers positioned themselves as the center of modernity and generated a new perspective, in which the natural trajectory of humanity began in nature and culminated in Europe, the pinnacle of civilization. According to Quijano, this was only possible thanks to the colonization of America and the new racial dynamics that were constructed, which were replicated

throughout the rest of world and in turn, cemented the Eurocentric myth of Europe as the highest form of human civilization (2000:541-547).

This ideology could take root on a global scale because, as Quijano (2000) argues, Europeans had the means to effectively place themselves at the center of the new global economy, profiting yet again from the newly constituted race-based distinctions. Not only did they control the wealth and resources of the American continent, but they also had the unpaid labor of the “inferior races” at their disposal, thus having the economical capability to become the center of global capitalism and imposing its colonial dominance at a global scale (2000:537-540).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, European hegemony extended beyond economics and civilization and encroached upon every perspective and every relation between peoples.

In effect, all of the experiences, histories, resources, and cultural products ended up in one global cultural order revolving around European or Western hegemony. Europe’s hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony. (Quijano 2000:540)

This is of particular importance in the context of Indigenous peoples in Latin America, since as Quijano (2000) writes, many of them were characterized as being illiterate and were denied their intellectual legacy, causing them to be violently and profoundly repressed. They were consequently forced to learn the dominant culture of the colonizers i.e., to adopt the European perspective of knowledge, resulting in the colonization of their culture and their perspectives as well. The basic principle behind these processes was the already discussed idea of European natural superiority, which itself branched into a series of dichotomies contrasting the modern, scientific, rational, civilized Europe to the traditional, mystical, irrational, primitive rest of the world (2000:541-542).

Given the above, it is clear that racial classification pervaded every aspect of the interaction between European settlers and non-European natives. Moreover, Quijano (2000) proposes that the colonial ideology also created a cognitive model with the purpose of not only classifying and dominating, but rather of reframing their own previous singular identities into a new identity within the colonial hegemony. In this context, all of the different peoples of the American continent were merged into a single “Indian” identity, instead of being distinctively recognized as different native cultures. They were thus reduced to a generalized homogenous group, stripped of their history, culture, language, knowledge, and of course, identity.

Furthermore, they were given a racially charged and negatively connotated identity, in keeping with the racial dynamics of inferiority. From that point onwards, they were understood as an inferior race, only capable of achieving an inferior culture and were perpetually framed in juxtaposition to Europe. In other words, their past before the coming of European colonizers was considered relevant only insofar as it served as a “primitive” contrast to the “civilized” Europe (2000:551-552).

Interestingly, Quijano (2000) writes that the process that began with the colonization of America continued well beyond the timeframe of the colonies, arguably serving as the founding stone of the global world of today. According to Quijano, there are still “three central elements that affect the quotidian life of the totality of the global population: the coloniality of power, capitalism, and Eurocentrism” (2000:545). These three elements are closely woven into a wide-reaching globally hegemonic system, which encompasses power relations, economic dynamics and knowledge production and knowledge perspective in the form of Eurocentrism (2000:233-49).

With that in mind, it is worth reflecting upon the role of Eurocentrism in academic research, including this very paper. Indeed, by continuing Quijano’s line of thought it stands to reason that academic papers reproduce the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge production, just as they play a role in maintaining colonial power dynamics. For instance, Wolfe (1999) argues that colonialism is still an unexamined and badly characterized topic, due to the pervasiveness of Eurocentrism. In relation to Indigenous peoples, this means that the Eurocentric academic perspective continues to structurally invade Indigenous space and rationalize it according to its own perspective, claiming authority over it (1999:1-3).

With that said, it would be disingenuous to pretend that this paper is not inside of the Eurocentric academic context. Far from it, the education I have received stems from the hegemonic academic perspective, and therefore it will be reflected throughout this thesis in one way or another. Besides, not being Indigenous myself, my own background as a Spanish speaking Colombian will probably be reflected in these pages too. But instead of being a disadvantage, I consider it an asset that allows me to confront my own biases and preconceived notions. Hence, I do not intend to deny the role my subjectivity plays in my writing, nor do I claim to be completely objective. Rather, the goal is to explore the topic while transparently acknowledging some of the biases that might be hidden behind supposed objectiveness.

This is particularly important in the case of Indigenous peoples and their languages, since they are not abstract concepts but living, breathing people. As was shown above, Indigenous peoples have been historically conceptualized in a non-neutral way and it would not be a big leap to think that some of those connotations have carried over to the modern use of the term. Certainly, going by Quijano's assertions, such connotations are an integral part of capitalism and Eurocentrism and, thus, remain a part of the dominant ideology. If that is the case, then it is important to question how the term is used and how it can have an effect on their lives. These are living people that are still affected by the way they have been conceptualized in the past, and without acknowledging the biases explained above, it is easy to partake in and perpetuate that ideology of inferiority.

Even so, understanding the ideology is an important step towards further differentiating between Indigenous peoples and other minorities. Based on the idea of European superiority, for instance, Indigenous peoples were subjugated in a more disruptive way and as a result were left in a more vulnerable state than European minorities (Kymlicka 2008:9). But perhaps a more interesting distinction lies in the relationship between minorities and states. According to Howard et al. (2018), there is a structural difference in the way Indigenous and non-Indigenous minorities relate to the state, due to the racially based ideology of inferiority. In Latin America specifically, the colonial society was built around that racial classification and modern states still carry that legacy within their societies, where discriminatory attitudes and habits were, and still are, deeply engrained into the system. European states, on the other hand, were not entirely founded on colonial ideologies and thus relate to their minorities differently (2018:24).

Circling back to the initial question of who Indigenous peoples are and how they can be defined, there are even more characteristics that can be used to further define and differentiate Indigenous peoples. However, a profound discussion of the matter could likely warrant a paper of its own and far exceeds the scope of this paper. For now, having mentioned some relevant key issues, it is fitting to change focus and explore the effect this classification had, and continues to have, on the lives of Indigenous peoples, especially those in Latin America.

To begin, López (2014) writes that Latin America is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse areas worldwide, being home to more than 650 Indigenous groups and more than 550 different languages. In some countries like Guatemala and Bolivia, they are even demographic majorities, but because of the colonial power structure they continue to be a political and social minority (2014:19-22). In terms of languages, it is worth mentioning that not

all Indigenous communities speak an indigenous language and many tongues have been lost, especially in the areas where earlier contact between colonizers and Indigenous peoples took place (Sichra 2009a:13). This highlights the monolingual ideology that was imposed during the colonial period and that gave way to assimilationist language policies that ultimately led to an ideology of monoculturalism as well (Hamel 2008:94).

Indeed, López (2014) mentions that monolingualism and monoculturalism were part of Latin America's policies from very early on, based on the belief that diversity was a problem to be solved. Education played a significant part in the efforts to assimilate Indigenous peoples, as schools only taught in the dominant European language and children were slowly incorporated into the "civilized" way of life. This approach to education puts Indigenous students at a linguistic disadvantage and has had a negative impact on their educational achievements, which is the reason why in some countries there is still a high rate of adult illiteracy amongst Indigenous peoples (2014:23).

Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar (2010) delve deeper into the topic of education and explain that policies like this one have a twofold effect, affecting both the Indigenous languages and its speakers. In terms of language, the vocabulary remains underdeveloped because it is not used in any formal or scientific context. In turn, this causes the attitude towards the native language to change because it is perceived as less valuable than the dominant one, which in turn often leads to a diminished use of the native language. In terms of the speakers, students that are denied education in their own language face linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological difficulties and it prevents them from achieving academic success, while simultaneously substituting their own culture with the dominant one (2010:10-11).

Policies like this one also negatively affect the estimates regarding the degree of language endangerment, for "[m]ost of the disappearing languages will be indigenous or tribal languages [...], and most indigenous languages in the world would disappear according to these estimates. Education is one of the most important direct causal factors in this disappearance." (Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar 2010:35). Language therefore plays a significant role in maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity, yet it can also be used as a tool to maintain and reproduce structures of dominance.

If viewed through the lens of linguisticism, there are many parallels between the strategies used to prevent Indigenous peoples from using their native languages and the strategies used during the process of colonization. In this case, Skutnabb-Kangas & Dunbar (2011) describe

linguicism as a much more subtle and sophisticated way of keeping power structures in place. Instead of using a racial classification to justify the hierarchy of dominance, language replaces race as the base of inferiority and the monolingual ideology prevents other languages from developing and reproducing themselves. Consequently, Indigenous language-speakers are denied self-determination on the basis of not having a worthy language, and they are further invalidated and rendered invisible thanks to the labels attached to them. Lastly, they are made to believe that it is a fair and natural distribution of power, not an arbitrary one (2010:40-41).

Nevertheless, it is not precisely accurate to frame education in Latin America as a completely monolingual system. Hamel (2008) identifies two different communities where bilingualism is a given, namely Indigenous peoples and elite private education stemming from European immigrant communities. Both types of bilingualism are clearly quite different and, as Hamel puts it, “[t]he two types of communities and their schools position themselves at opposite poles of social stratification and the scales of extreme inequality that characterise all Latin American countries, and their actors hardly ever cross paths or exchange words.” (2008:59). In the case of Indigenous peoples, there are now some alternatives to the assimilationist approach discussed above but there is still no consensus about the best way to provide students with a bilingual education. One further hurdle is the extended poverty in Indigenous regions and the limited resources allotted to education there, which is why Indigenous educational systems show poor results in most Latin American countries (2008:58-63).

By contrast, immigrant communities arriving to Latin America from Europe were able to create private schools to cater to the linguistic needs of their communities (Hamel 2008). They provided exclusive education in the immigrant language and mostly enjoyed a high status, as they were considered to be a representation of education in the most developed and highly regarded European countries. With time, these schools became attractive to national elites and positioned themselves as private elite schools, no longer teaching exclusively in the immigrant language but rather offering a bilingual education suited for the globalized world. In general terms, students in these schools acquire highly demanded competences and mostly enjoy high levels of academic achievement (2008:69-76).

Hamel (2008) frames both types of education as opposite ends of two extremes, in a continent where inequality is rampant. On the one hand, students who attend prestigious bilingual schools represent the wealthiest part of the population, enjoy academic success, are encouraged and recognized for their bilingualism, and are proficient in non-stigmatized

languages. On the other hand, Indigenous school children usually belong to the lowest income group, they do not have many academic achievements and in general, face many disadvantages that make it hard for them to fulfill their potential (2008:77-80). These glaring differences within the education system demonstrate the deep class inequality of Latin America and according to Hamel, prestigious bilingual schools “participate in the reproduction of an ideology of elitism that is not based on merit but on socioeconomic segregation and, very often, on a sense of superiority of the developed countries they represent and from which the schools draw in part their prestige” (2008:80).

Surely, the ideology of elitism mentioned by Hamel mirrors the same colonial ideology that was previously explained. If linguicism is also taken into consideration, it is clear how Indigenous peoples are at a disadvantage in terms of education, based on nothing but the perceived value of their languages. Bilingualism is acceptable and even encouraged as long as the language is desirable and on the upper echelons of the language hierarchy; if not, it is not worth pursuing. Thus, languages are not necessarily neutral, and a certain value and prestige is associated with them, revealing an extra ideological layer to the whole discussion of Indigenous peoples.

As explained by Dorian (1998), the prestige of a language is directly tied to the prestige of its speakers. Clearly, speakers with high levels of power, wealth, and prestige will speak a prestigious language and vice versa, and not surprisingly, those in power tend to be speakers of high prestige languages. Having some knowledge of that dominant language is certainly advantageous but there is no necessity to give up one’s own language in the process of acquiring some competency in the dominant language. What is interesting is that, according to Dorian, “tendencies towards complete ancestral language abandonment seem to be very strong in the widely distributed areas of European settlement” (1998:5). Arguably, this stems from an ideology of contempt, where only the standardized form of a language is considered legitimate enough and both dialects and other languages are considered inferior. Under such circumstances, speakers of low prestige languages often reach the decision to abandon their language, so as to distance themselves and their children from their otherwise socially disadvantaged position (1998:3-9).

The aforementioned ideology of contempt provides a good complement to the colonial ideology discussed above, exemplifying yet another of its features. Just as native societies were deemed inferior and were constantly contrasted to the civilized riches of Europe, less

prestigious languages were equally viewed with contempt and, when compared to the standard language, deemed inferior. What is more, the attitude of contempt led European settlers to assume that apparently primitive technological developments meant primitive language development (Dorian 1998). They could not conceive of a rich language existing in those places where they could not perceive material wealth, and when combined with the low prestige of Indigenous peoples, they were led to further believe that their dominant languages were naturally superior and better suited to express complexity (1998:9-12).

All these misconceptions endangered, and continue to do so, the languages spoken by groups that lack power, prestige, and wealth. Indigenous peoples fall into this category, and it is a vicious circle where being considered inferior lowers their status, which in turn lowers the prestige of their languages, which further lowers their own prestige. For Dorian (1998), there is an undeniable link between adopting a dominant language and achieving material well-being, which is why for many, the only way to achieve a better social position is to abandon their language and the disadvantages associated with it. Despite this, some endangered languages have managed to resurface thanks to the efforts of its speakers. But this is a challenging task, and sometimes it might even be too late to rescue them (1998:20-21).

Leonard (2017) frames this process as one of language reclamation, understood as a process where a community claims its right to use its language and set its own goals regarding it. In contrast to revitalization, the focus is not the number of speakers and the proficiency in the language but rather the worldviews and needs of its speakers. In this manner, reclamation works as a form of decolonization that takes into consideration worldviews that are usually excluded from the Eurocentric perspective. For it to work, Leonard argues that the indigenous perspective should be prioritized, as “even well-intentioned Indigenous language work will perpetuate colonial power structures when its products demote ideas from Indigenous communities relative to those of the Western academy” (2017:20). To counter the imposition of values and knowledge perspectives through Eurocentric research, it has become increasingly common to address issues of social justice, but research on the topic continues to occasionally be a source of conflict (2017:16-20).

McCarty et al. (2019) elaborate further and note that language reclamation is also political work. Not only are they reclaiming authority over their language, but they are also addressing the colonial ideology that endangered the language in the first place. Overall, language

reclamation places power and authority at the center of Indigenous language issues and it is a highlight of the decolonization component of contemporary language movements (2019:2-3).

Yet the issues surrounding Indigenous language are not limited to the previously discussed topics. Translation also intersects with ideology and cannot be disregarded when considering its impact on the lives of Indigenous peoples. As has been explained throughout this chapter, interactions with Indigenous peoples occur inside of a mostly rigid power structure, and translation and interpretation are no exception. De Pedro Rico et al. (2018) portray translation in this context as highly complex, both in linguistic and social terms. Indigenous languages in Latin America diverge greatly from the dominant European languages, making translation a difficult task. However, the asymmetrical power relationship between both sides is perhaps a more important obstacle. That challenge arises from the historical burden of inequality and injustice that influences the translation process, as both languages do not enjoy the same position relative to one another (2018:162).

The role of power in the process of translation, specifically regarding Indigenous languages, adds an interesting degree of nuance to the topic of translating and interpreting for Indigenous communities. Korak (2021) approaches the topic by rebuking a well-known metaphor of translation, namely the notion that translation works as a bridge between people that would otherwise not communicate. From a decolonizing perspective, though, such a metaphor is inaccurate because it presupposes that, on the one side, every actor involved wants to participate in the communication process and, on the other, that all participants are at an equal level (2021:84).

Both assertions are disputed by Korak (2021) on the basis of the imbalanced and asymmetrical nature of the interactions that take place. Translating under those terms and framing it as bridging a gap between two different groups creates the illusion of homogeneity and harmony, but it is not a harmonious or equal process for all sides. The field is still largely dominated by Eurocentric views, and therein translation can be seen as an act of reduction, as speakers of Indigenous languages are simplified as speakers/non-speakers of the dominant language and, yet again, categorized under European terms (2021:87-89).

When comparing the different ambits mentioned in regard to indigenous peoples, certain patterns emerge, and in recognizing them, some nuance can be added to the topic. First, there is a tendency towards creating hierarchies and classifications, where Indigenous peoples are placed on the lower echelons and their complexity is reduced, in order to justify that

placement. Second, such hierarchies are internalized and naturalized to the point of being perceived as an objective truth, effectively denying the historical processes that led to that power configuration. Power imbalance is thus another relevant characteristic that oftentimes has more to do with wealth and prestige than with population numbers. It certainly permeates the whole discourse around Indigenous peoples and can repeatedly be seen as a source of conflict.

Third, the tendency to frame Indigenous peoples in European terms is perhaps the pattern that concerns me and this paper the most. It is indeed a challenge, if not an impossibility, to distance myself from the Eurocentric context I find myself in. The question is, then, how to face my own preconceived notions, prejudices, unconscious biases, and intrinsic subjectivity, without perpetuating an ideology that has been so damaging to so many. It is certainly paradoxical to expose the Eurocentric knowledge perspective while simultaneously belonging to it, but by acknowledging it, the discussion around the topic can be more transparent and, more importantly, it can open the door towards a more inclusive and complete discussion on the matter.

Having said that, a wide exploration of the topic would not be complete without also acknowledging that the ideology that permeates the discourse around Indigenous peoples and their languages has not remained completely static in the centuries since it made its first appearance. Even though the main aspects remain largely unchanged, there have been different attitudes during this period of time, and especially in terms of translation policy, there are some historical circumstances that help better understand the trajectory the topic has taken. The next section of this thesis will then focus on the history of translation policy in Latin America, exemplifying the subtle way in which ideology operates and changes with time.

2.2. Translation and language policy throughout history

Translation policy in Latin America has been in constant flux from the start, first as a homogenous policy coming from the Spanish Crown, and later as a policy stemming from the newly independent countries. Of course, translation practices did not always correspond to the dictated policies, but those diverging points helped further shape the translation policy throughout the centuries.

A look into the history of Latin American translation policy begins at the time of the colonization of the American continent, when both Indigenous peoples and Spanish colonizers were confronted with a completely unknown other. In general terms, Simon (2000) portrays translation in the colonial period as an expression of the power of the colonizers, as they were the ones deciding *what* was worth translating and *how* it was best done. In this way, translation was used as a tool to effectively contain and reduce Indigenous culture into a Eurocentric framework, and it became part of the violence used to construct the colonial subject (2000:10-11). And yet it is undeniable that regardless of ideology, that initial encounter between the native population and the colonizers needed some kind of translation for effective communication to take place.

The colonizers were faced with a high number of unknown languages and peoples, and communication became an immense challenge that combined both practical and ideological goals.

Right from the beginning, communication with the indigenous Americans and their innumerable languages became a major challenge to the conquerors and the colonial rulers that succeeded them. In order to effectively achieve the integration of native peoples within the colonial society and in order to spread Christianity among them, a common basis of understanding was needed (Adelaar 2012:2).

However, it would be inaccurate to frame translation as the first tactic used in order to establish a common basis of understanding. Triana y Antorveza (1987) mentions that, at first, European colonizers and indigenous peoples communicated mostly by using gestures and signs. At a later stage, they resorted to abducting young Indigenous men and teaching them Spanish, turning them into hastily trained interpreters. It is still worth noting that the initial attempt at training interpreters was focused on them learning Spanish and not necessarily interpreting. What is more, there were so many languages being spoken in the continent that there was no guarantee that the abductees would speak the languages needed (1987:3-7).

As it happens, the vast linguistic diversity on the American continent was more than likely a challenge for the different native groups themselves (Adelaar 2012). Before the arrival of the Spaniards, communication between different Indigenous groups was already taking place and there are hints that point to a complex relationship between Indigenous languages, with indications that language played an important role in the pre-Hispanic cultures. Moreover, the Inca Empire in South America managed to successfully maintain a multicultural and

multilingual empire, expanding their language but also coexisting with the languages of the groups they were conquering. With that in mind, it seems very likely that the Inca had an explicit language policy (2012:1). Triana y Antorveza (1987) writes that the language of the Inca Empire, Quechua, was widespread around the empire and played a significant role in unifying the different factions. To achieve that, rulers from all conquered groups had to visit Cuzco, one of the main Inca cities, and become knowledgeable in the language and culture of the empire. They were allowed to retain their customs and languages, though, as long as they kept the Inca traditions as well. Additionally, Inca were sent to the conquered areas to live next to the original population so that there was a permanent cultural exchange between all sides (1987:155-157).

For the Spaniards, this represented an opportunity to solve some of the communication difficulties they encountered, as they came to the realization that they could make use of Quechua to effectively communicate and bring the population closer to the Christian faith (Triana y Antorveza 1987:157). This shaped the initial language and translation policy because, though seemingly superfluous, the task of Christianizing the indigenous peoples was indeed of actual political importance and seen as the duty and obligation of the Spanish Crown. Indeed, in 1493 the Pope granted the Catholic Kings of Spain the newly found lands of America and gave them the mission to evangelize their inhabitants and teach them the Christian faith (1987:45-47). The easiest and fastest way to achieve that goal was not to forcefully teach them Spanish, but rather to spread the Christian faith using the native languages, which is why they favored already widespread languages like Quechua (Adelaar 2012:2-3).

That initial language policy relied on the so called “lenguas generales”, which were languages commonly spoken by many different multilingual groups (Adelaar 2012). Within that category, Quechua was but one of many languages that were widely spoken, alongside Muisca, Tupí, Araucanian, and other languages similarly distributed across the continent (2012:19). These general languages facilitated the communication process greatly, seeing that they could be used as a lingua franca and thereby reduce the linguistic complexity, but as Triana y Antorveza (1987) explains, there were some detractors that much preferred to strengthen and expand the Spanish language. In the early stages of the colonial period, though, that perspective was deemed impractical, and less than hundred years after the initial contact the use of general languages was de facto the primary policy used (1987:158-162).

That being the case, members of the clergy that engaged in missionary activities became fluent in the languages of the region they were intending to work in, in order to effectively

propagate Christianity (Adelaar 2012:2). Some of them were not keen on learning the languages and relied on native bilingual interpreters, but the use of the native languages was encouraged by the Church, and at least at first it was thought that using their native tongue was a more efficient and more successful way to evangelize them, in large part because there were not enough Spanish speakers to justify the imposition of the language (Mar-Molinero 2000:29). Likewise, many explorers saw the imperative need to learn the local languages as a means of survival, and once the initial military campaign gave way to a permanent settlement, the number of Spaniards who could speak a native language increased greatly (Triana y Antorveza 1987:124).

Yet this multilingual approach did not last long. As Mar-Molinero (2000) notes, the language policy during the colonial period demonstrated an inexorable movement from the initial multilingualism described above to monolingualism with Spanish as the dominant language. This change in policy can be traced back to the two main powers behind the whole colonial enterprise: the political-economical one and the religious one, the former being represented by the Spanish Crown and the latter by the Church. The process of colonization was then twofold, and both powers exercised pressure to move away from multilingualism and embrace a monolingual language policy, although the pressure was clearly in response to different concerns. For the Spanish Crown, the main concern was to achieve unity and a centralized empire, which was a difficult task when considering the size of its territories. Instead of having a central authority ruling over the whole continent, the land was divided into four large Viceroyalties, dependent on the Spanish Crown but otherwise independent from each other. The Spanish language was therefore seen as a useful vehicle through which centralization and unity could be achieved. As for the Church, after the initial acceptance of the native languages, it was thought that the population could not really embrace the values and principles of Christianity if they continued to use their mother tongue. What is more, it was argued that the native languages could not accurately depict Christian values, due to the lack of grammatical and semantic richness, mirroring the idea that they were inferior languages and thus unsuitable for Christian thought (2000:28-29).

This move towards monolingualism was officially reaffirmed in 1526, when the Indigenous inhabitants of America were first considered vassals of the Kingdom of Spain, and the first laws pertaining to their treatment were enacted (Triana y Antorveza 1987). Members of the clergy were then entrusted with the task of spreading the Spanish language throughout the American territories, going hand in hand with the spread of Christianity itself. From that

moment onwards, the Spanish Crown had an explicit language legislation and policy, and that initial stage recognized the linguistic diversity of the continent and pointed to interpreters as the solution to the difficulties faced by the conquerors (1987:197-203).

In the Viceroyalty that would later become modern-day Colombia, the New Kingdom of Granada, interpreters played a key role in helping the Spanish conquerors survive and spread, serving both as guides and interpreters (Triana y Antorveza 1987). Besides “interpreter”, they were referred to using names relating to the Spanish word for tongue, such as “lengua” or “lenguaraz”, and the expeditions employed many interpreters according to the linguistic needs they were encountering. The “lenguas” that were employed were usually taken as hostages and later sent to serve in different expeditions, which led to a cultural and linguistic exchange that not only influenced the Indigenous groups themselves, but also the Spanish language that was being spoken in the colonies, in order to better reflect the reality that was lived there (1987:106-113).

Those dynamics demonstrate that interpreters were a key element in the process of colonization, not only linguistically but also culturally. Triana y Antorveza (1987) explains that interpreters were seen as a window into the culture and the traditions of the groups that were encountered. In other words, they were used to gather information about other Indigenous peoples and were seen as assets and sources of information. As their role evolved and the needs of the colonizers changed, interpreters found themselves under pressure from both the Spaniards and other Indigenous peoples. Interestingly but perhaps unsurprisingly, this led to a general mistrust in their work. Consequently, in 1537 a new law dictated that interpretations at a court of justice had to be certified by another Indigenous person, in this case a Hispanicized¹ one, to hinder any abuse of their position (1987:207-211).

This suggests that there was a certain degree of power attached to the role of an interpreter, otherwise there would be no need to fear or legislate the abuse of said power. Indeed, it is clear that at that stage of the colonial period, “lenguas” played a more powerful role, less related to immediate help and survival and more relevant to the organization of the colonial enterprise. This topic is further explored by de la Puente Luna (2014), who characterizes both writing and the law as the foundations that sustained the colonial endeavor. The interpreters that were working in that context were few in number when compared to the ones employed by the Church or by other bureaucratic instances, but that affiliation to the pillars of the colonial

¹Indigenous person that adopted the Spanish language, culture, and way of life.

society granted them personal influence and identified them as loyal vassals to the King, while also enjoying a privileged link to the Spanish Crown. Moreover, they were literate beyond the ability to read and write, for they were also well versed in the legislation and the official language of the empire (2014:144).

To become an interpreter to the Crown was then a meaningful way to curry favor with the Spanish authorities, gaining a privileged status within their position as native subjects of the King (de la Puente Luna 2014). Certainly, even though interpreting was framed as the obligation of the royal subjects, the role of the interpreters came to be considered a sign of pure blood, nobility, royal service, and also the rightful administration of royal justice, granting prestige, power, and privilege to those performing it. To be sure, that privilege depended on the legitimacy and the trustworthiness of the interpreters, which were more closely tied to their traits than to their linguistic capabilities. To give a few examples, competence in the native language was not as important as familiarity with Spanish culture. Indeed, their Catholic conscience was as important as their linguistic expertise, and to be descendants of a noble and loyal group meant being trusted and considered accurate interpreters. Thus, linguistic competence was a secondary concern, and above all loyalty to the King was expected and was the main sign of a legitimate interpretation. This turned interpreters into allies of the Crown and contrasted them with the common characterization of Indigenous peoples as liars and unreliable witnesses (2014:146-150).

All that is not to say that the interpreters only acted in representation of the Crown. As de la Puente Luna (2014) explains, Indigenous interpreters played a crucial role in forming and sustaining the Spanish Empire, providing a connection between the local and the imperial contexts, between the natives and the Spanish colonizers. Their proximity to the courts was their main advantage and

language interpreters associated with the *audiencia*² and its staff of officials served as legal agents and solicitors for native leaders and communities [...]. Through their daily activities, these interpreters-general brokered between the *audiencia* and the king's native subjects, but they also connected indigenous groups with the Habsburg royal court (2014:145).

Some of them even travelled to Europe and were truly intermediaries between the American colonies and the powerful courts of Europe, interacting and positioning themselves at both sides of the Atlantic. What is more, they were a necessary part in dispensing justice, not only

² Court that administered royal justice.

interpreting in all the different stages of the proceedings, but also working as legal agents themselves, thanks to their knowledge and expertise in all legal matters. Of course, this societal privilege and prestige also translated into material wealth and riches, placing the interpreters in the upper classes of the Indigenous peoples, and also granting them enough power to pursue their own aspirations and interests (2014:145-155).

The role of native interpreters in the justice system of the colonial society in Latin America was then a very prominent one. As de la Puente Luna (2014) illustrates, they were vital in the process of state-building, as they granted Indigenous communities access to the legal system and the royal courts. In that sense, they were fundamental in sustaining the monarchy's rule over the colonies, due to their loyal support for both the Crown and also the justice system around which the colonies were legitimized (2014:158-159). Yet the courts were not the only point of contact between Indigenous peoples and Spanish speakers. As was previously mentioned, Christianity represented a strong faction within the power structures of the time, but was not as successful as the justice system in employing interpreters to fulfil its linguistic needs.

Triana y Antorveza (1987) mentions three main reasons why the use of "lenguas" in the context of the Church was not as successful as expected. First, it was believed that instead of accurately interpreting what was being said, they would rather say what they considered appropriate. Second, having interpreters at their disposal meant that the clergy was no longer learning the Indigenous languages and could communicate only through an interpreter. And third, the use of interpreters apparently failed to convey the authentic meaning of the gospel, and the Indigenous population would maintain its own religious practices instead of adopting the Christian ones. Following this reasoning, the Church opted for an approach where multilingual priests were preferred for as long as the Indigenous population needed their mother tongues for religious communication (1987:238-239).

It seems clear that the language and translation policy during the colonial period was not precisely unified. On the one hand, interpreters were key in maintaining the administrative system in place, and on the other, they failed to properly articulate the concerns of the clergy and its members. The official policy stemming from the royal court was then slow in shifting from a multilingual to a monolingual policy, and the legislation regarding the spread of Spanish was not as compulsory as some expected it to be (Triana y Antorveza 1987). Still, Spanish was taught first to the leaders and captains and gradually spread to reach more and more members

of society, assimilating them into Spanish culture and religion. Hispanicized indigenous peoples had a higher status than those who did not speak Spanish, and both groups were kept apart, as the latter were considered inferior and uncultivated. As time went on, the policy of Hispanicizing Indigenous peoples expanded to avoid the continuity of Indigenous cultures, and to do so targeted the mestizo³ population as well, keeping mestizos away from Indigenous spaces (1987:211-222).

After that initial wave of legislation, the discourse around Indigenous languages changed, reflecting the changes that were also taking place in the societal configuration of the colonies. When exploring the topic, Triana y Antorveza (1987) mentions that in 1596, the King of Spain was presented with a plan that intended to change and unify the language policy regarding Indigenous languages. It was argued that teaching them Spanish would broaden their cultural horizons but, more importantly, it was said that the native superstitions and beliefs would remain for as long as Indigenous languages were spoken, which would represent an obstacle to the civilizational and linguistic goals of the Spanish Crown. Interestingly, this shift in policy was also proposed as a way to maintain the social order that privileged members of the clergy born in Spain over those born in America. Namely, it was argued that mestizos and criollos⁴ were the only ones capable of dominating the Indigenous languages by virtue of being raised by Indigenous women, which gave them an advantage over those coming directly from Spain (1987:224-226).

To be sure, bilingualism was for many years a continuous part of the social and cultural reality of the colonies, and criollos and mestizos did speak the native languages extensively (Triana y Antorveza 1987). Mostly, the languages were learnt informally, at a young age, and many criollos were fluent even if they were not mestizos, making the population highly bilingual (1987:240-242). That being the case, it would seem like a monolingual language policy did not really respond to the linguistic needs of the population. Multilingualism was one important characteristic of the American continent before the coming of the Spaniards and did not seem to be particularly problematic for the Indigenous population, who were often fluent in many Indigenous languages. Also worth considering is the disparity of the numbers of colonizers and Indigenous peoples, as the former were comparatively few in number, which made it easier for the Spaniards to learn the Indigenous languages rather than the other way around. Moreover, after the initial period of the expeditions gave way to the settled colonies, the

³ Person of mixed European and Indigenous descent.

⁴ Person of European descent born in the colonies.

cultural exchange that took place developed into a mostly multilingual society, where languages coexisted even if they were used in widely different contexts.

Within this framework, there is hardly any practical explanation for the policy trend towards monolingualism. The multilingual system was able to provide access in the form of interpreters, without neglecting the acquisition of Spanish on a voluntary basis, and communication was established across all levels of society. However, going back and exploring the topic through the lens of ideology could better explain the reasons why monolingualism was pursued. The ideology of inferiority yet again shaped the relationship with the Indigenous population and was used to argue for a more restrictive language and translation policy.

According to Triana y Antorveza (1987), it seems that the belief that Indigenous peoples lacked rational thought began spreading around 1517, as a way to justify the treatment towards them. Nevertheless, many members of the clergy were stark opponents of that idea and vouched for their intelligence, their rights, their dignity, and their liberty, ultimately convincing the Pope that Indigenous peoples were capable of adopting the Christian faith and effectively banning their slavery (1987:275-278). And yet, the ideology of inferiority still took root around the idea that Christianity was a superior imperative and the Indigenous population had to be brought closer to it. Even if the population was considered capable of rational thought and could be converted, it was argued that their languages were incapable of expressing spirituality and that their vocabulary was not suited for Christian doctrine (1987:394).

In this way, indigenous peoples were framed as inferior for as long as they did not share the Christian faith, which for many meant that they were inferior for as long as they did not speak Spanish i.e., the language that could correctly express the superior Christian faith. That power dynamic mirrored the political and military imbalance between the natives and the Spanish conquerors. In turn, this was further reflected in a wider context, where every Spanish victory in America immensely increased the prestige and status of the language (Triana y Antorveza 1987). The language came to be highly regarded in many different areas and regions, spreading through the world in the form of literature, music, theology, art, and diplomacy. In this way, Spanish cemented its position as the national language of the Iberian Peninsula and became a strong marker of identity and belonging to the Spanish civilization (1987:375-384).

Undoubtedly, this development was also influential in the policy making of the Viceroyalties in America. Spain's higher status and might ultimately led to a desire to unify and centralize the Hispanic Empire, and in the 18th century linguistic unity was seen as a means to

achieve political stability (Triana y Antorveza 1987). Indeed, the discourse against Indigenous languages was no longer focused on the capability to express Christian thought, but rather it was argued that native languages were a potential source of rebellion and were a hurdle for the proper integration of the natives into the cultural and political system of Spain. Unlike the attempts to Hispanicize the population in previous centuries, the 18th century saw the rise of Spanish as the only official language, and in 1770 all native languages were prohibited, with the caveat that the policy was not considered a successful one (1987:500-511).

As Mar-Molinero (2000) puts it, the policy was largely ignored due to lack of resources and lack of commitment, because “[f]or the Spanish-speaking elites it was more comfortable to have labour from a population who were ignorant and disenfranchised by their lack of mastery of Castilian⁵” (2000:30). However, although it seemed an unsuccessful policy at first and there was a disconnection between the explicit policy issued by the Crown and the actual linguistic landscape, Spanish eventually took hold and a monolingual language policy became the norm, albeit as a policy of the newly independent republics and not the Spanish Crown. The Latin American elites were mostly Spanish monolinguals and were also the leaders of the independence movement of the early 19th century. Once independence was won and the region fragmented into republics, the elites were faced with the challenge of creating a sense of nationhood and, inspired by the French Revolution and French nationalism, Spanish was chosen as a helpful instrument in unifying and creating the identity of the newly formed Latin American nations. The decision was mostly political in nature and not based on the number of Spanish speakers, since a large part of the population still remained monolingual in their native mother tongue. Rather, Spanish was promoted as the only language of the republics on the basis of political equality and democracy, which meant that citizens had to be able to participate and thus needed to have a common language to guarantee communication (2000:30-32).

This idea of language as a tool to create a national identity was central to Latin American countries up until the 20th century, essentially ignoring the pluralism and diversity of the region in favor of the values, culture, and language that were the legacy of the Spanish colonizers (Mar-Molinero 2000:34). Owing to this ideal of nation-building, Indigenous influences in most Latin American societies were largely ignored until relatively recently, even if multilingualism was never fully eradicated. Certainly, Latin America continues to be an extremely linguistically diverse region, and even though all of its native languages are endangered or

⁵Dominant variety in Spain, often used as a synonym to Spanish.

potentially endangered, efforts have been made to avoid their disappearance (Adelaar 2012:25). This recent development challenges the egalitarian perspective that requires everyone to be the same, and fights against the policies of assimilation that have resulted from the monolingual and monocultural nation-building process (Mar-Molinero 2000:71).

The task is very challenging, though, because Spanish succeeded in becoming the dominant language and it is immensely superior in terms of power. Interestingly, its power is not necessarily derived from the number of speakers, because the Indigenous communities sometimes represent the numerical majority but have been disenfranchised from power (Mar-Molinero 2000:62-63). Rather, the power is derived from the prestige of the language and that of its speakers, which, as we have seen, were responsible for policy making in the early years of nation-building. Furthermore, the status of Spanish is reinforced by its presence worldwide, and its position as the more prestigious language further tips the scale towards its dominance over Indigenous languages (2000:108-109).

Also worth considering is the socio-economical asymmetries between Spanish speakers in Latin America and speakers of indigenous languages. It was explained already that Indigenous communities are disadvantaged in a myriad of ways and that the Latin American Indigenous peoples are no exception, representing mostly a poor, marginalized, and underprivileged sector of Latin American society (Mar-Molinero 2000). Their underprivileged position is of course not only related to socioeconomic disparities; for the Indigenous population, it means that in order to overcome the difficulties of their historical disadvantage, they have to assimilate to the dominant and well-respected Spanish speaking society (2000:53). However, if they do not yield and instead retain their native language, they are faced with the obstacle of underdeveloped translation and interpreting services, which are mostly ad hoc, unlike the existing institutionally regulated services between Spanish and other prestigious foreign languages (Howard et al. 2018:20).

With that in mind, it seems that translation and language policy in Latin America has always been closely tied to power. Before the Spanish colonizers arrived on the American shores, that power was held by the Indigenous empires, and they managed to consolidate a multilingual empire spanning vast territories. With the coming of the Spaniards, the power dynamic changed and, as previously described, the language and translation policies were not particularly consistent and remained in constant flux, depending on the needs of the Spaniards as the colonies stabilized and morphed with time.

At the initial stage, the main concern was survival and, as a consequence, many approaches were used simultaneously, with some learning the Indigenous languages and others relying on hastily trained interpreters. But once the Spanish Crown had a stable presence in the continent, a more robust language policy was explicitly implemented, and it relied on both interpreters and language acquisition to establish communication. The contradictory nature of the language and translation policy can be framed as a power struggle, with different factions arguing for the policy better suited to their interests, although Spanish was ultimately triumphant over the continent's Indigenous languages. That gradual move towards monolingualism was further strengthened by the prestige of Spanish, and it still shapes the relationships between Indigenous peoples and Spanish speakers.

Even so, contemporary language and translation policy in Latin America, and the rest of the world, for that matter, is not solely shaped by each individual country. International institutions also play a role in policy making, and their resolutions regarding Indigenous peoples have been instrumental in influencing the way in which countries deal with their Indigenous population. The next section of this chapter will delve into some of the international resolutions pertaining to Indigenous peoples and their languages, while raising parallels with some of the topics discussed so far.

2.3. International resolutions

The 20th century saw the rise of international institutions as a relevant political factor worldwide. The international community has played a key role in influencing policy making and has thus created a common ground for certain topics, regardless of country. Of course, explicit policies do not necessarily correspond to the actual practices of a country or its population, but they are a relevant part of policy making nonetheless. For the purpose of this paper, three international resolutions will be discussed, as they are the ones more closely concerned with Indigenous peoples and incorporate them into the framework of international law.

The first international resolution to be discussed is the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No. 107, the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957. This Convention was the precursor of future resolutions and is framed in the preamble as a tool to better protect the Indigenous populations, to help them integrate into the wider national communities they are part of, and to improve their conditions. It was considered that Indigenous

peoples did not have access to the same rights as the rest of the population and could not benefit from the rights they were entitled to, because of their disadvantaged social, economic, or cultural situation.

The Convention consists of 37 articles covering topics ranging from social security to education, having a wide scope in terms of its application in different areas of life. Even so, the Convention arguably shows a tendency towards an assimilationist approach, and some of its articles are problematic in light of the topics discussed so far. In terms of language, for instance, article 23 states that a progressive transition from the Indigenous mother tongue to the respective dominant language must take place, essentially advocating for the assimilation of the Indigenous language into the dominant one. Another example is article 26, where translation is conceived as a resource to inform Indigenous peoples of their rights and duties but not much else, denying them the right to effectively enjoy an equal status in terms of access to anything more than their rights and duties emphasizing labor and welfare. Lastly, although article 28 is concerned with the implementation of the Convention, it also lends itself to a minimalistic approach, stating that the Convention shall be applied in a flexible manner and limiting its scope depending on the characteristics and conditions of each country. An analysis of the rest of the Convention would exceed the scope of this paper but it is worth noting that the Convention reflected the times when it was held, and was upgraded in 1989 to better mirror the international consensus regarding the topic.

The ILO Convention No.169, the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989, was indeed proposed as a revised version of Convention No. 107. Convention No. 169 is framed in the preamble as an appropriate measure to counter the assimilationist orientation of the previous one and it sought to prevent discrimination, to recognize the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain their languages, cultural practices, and identities, and also to allow them to enjoy their fundamental human rights to the same extent as the rest. This new Convention consists of 44 articles applicable to the same range of topics as Convention No. 107, although the assimilationist approach was replaced with an approach more concerned about instrumental rights.

To cite a few examples, article 28 removed the idea that the mother tongue had to be progressively replaced by the dominant one, advocating instead for an instrumental rights approach, where every Indigenous person should have the opportunity to attain fluency in the dominant language. In the case of translation, article 30 remains largely unchanged but it does put additional emphasis on other rights such as economic opportunities and health matters.

Furthermore, article 12 grants the right to participate in legal proceedings using a language understood by them. Thus, interpreting in legal settings was officially established as part of their instrumental rights. Finally, article 34 exposes yet again the difficulties of accomplishing every article in the Convention, stating that it shall be applied in a flexible manner, just as it was stated in Convention No. 107.

For a long time afterwards, the ILO Convention No. 169 was the most relevant international resolution regarding Indigenous peoples. In 2007, however, the United Nations (UN) adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and gave further nuance to the role of indigenous peoples within an international framework. The UN Declaration is comprised of 46 articles and an annex, where the main goals of the Declaration are listed. To summarize, it seeks the recognition, promotion, and protection of the rights and freedoms of Indigenous peoples, both at the individual and collective levels. It affirms their right to self-determination and self-control over their institutions and their development, their right to adhere to different practices and to freely pursue their own interests as well as their right to determine how their own children are to be educated. It also recognizes the value of diversity and opposes any type of discrimination, vowing to grant them the historically denied right to develop as they see fit. Among other things, it also recognizes that the situation in every country can be significantly different and encourages states to comply according to their own capabilities.

Clearly, the stated purposes of the UN Declaration have a wider scope than both of the ILO Conventions and even though all three resolutions are concerned with the same general topics, the UN Declaration emphasizes human rights more strongly. As an example, article 1 affirms indigenous peoples' right to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms under international law. In addition to that, articles 2 and 3 reaffirm their right to not be discriminated against and to self-determination in terms of political, economic, social, and cultural development. Other relevant rights pertaining to the subjects discussed so far throughout this paper are articles 8 and 11, the former referencing their right to not be forcefully assimilated by any means, and the latter reaffirming their right to revitalize their cultural traditions as they deem appropriate. Also worth mentioning is article 14, which reaffirms Indigenous children's right to an education in their own culture and using their own language as language of instruction.

All of the rights mentioned until now have close ties to the LHR mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, and indeed they derive their strength from the rights accorded to Indigenous peoples in this Declaration. But language, and by extension translation, is also accounted for in article 13, which states that Indigenous peoples have the right to impart all forms of knowledge without hinderance, including language. Additionally, a language understood by them ought to be used in administrative, legal, and political proceedings concerning them, by any appropriate means, such as translation and interpreting.

Undoubtedly, the UN Declaration could be analyzed in its entirety and open the door for an in-depth discussion of its underlying principles. On the surface, it seems to offer a more nuanced and complete perspective on the rights of Indigenous peoples than the ILO Conventions, but perhaps under further scrutiny ideological and Eurocentric principles could become clear. For the purpose and scope of this paper, though, the UN Declaration serves as a guiding principle to contrast with the Colombian language and translation policy, with the caveat that both the UN Declaration and the Colombian policy do not necessarily translate to the everyday practices of the Colombian population. The next chapter will explore precisely that topic, beginning with an overview of Colombia, its Indigenous languages, and its people, followed by an account of the language and translation policy in the country.

3. Colombia

The country of Colombia is the northernmost country of South America, and it is a highly diverse country in demographic, geographical, and biological terms. It is the only country in South America with access to both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, and its geographical conditions can be divided into 6 great natural regions, which can be seen in Figure 1. These regions range from tropical jungle to high mountains to coastal deserts and cover most thermal floors and temperatures (Chaves Mendoza 1995:16). According to the latest census performed in 2018, the ethnic population in the country amounts to 13.6% of the total of 48 million Colombians, out of which approximately 2 million identify themselves as Indigenous (IWGIA 2022). They are far from being homogenous, as the Colombian geography certainly suggests, and their languages are also exceptionally diverse. This poses a natural difficulty for the Colombian state, insofar as creating a comprehensive language and translation policy would presuppose juggling the different linguistic needs of the different Indigenous communities. To understand the policy in its particular context, it is paramount to locate the Indigenous peoples of Colombia in the geographical, linguistic, and historical positions they occupy within the country, as will be done in the following section of this chapter.



Figure 1: Natural regions of Colombia: Insular, Caribbean, Pacific, Andean, Orinoquía and Amazon (Socialhizo n.d.).

3.1. Indigenous peoples and languages

The geographical position of Colombia has played a significant role in the development of the Indigenous peoples inhabiting the country since before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. It is considered that before their arrival, the territory had approximately 100 different Indigenous languages, although the speakers of each were relatively few in number (Ardila 2010:28). That fragmented nature of the Indigenous groups can be understood in great part by the geographical characteristics of the country, not only spanning all kinds of varying climates and landscapes, but also being the nexus between North and South America, with all migration needing to pass through the territory (Landaburu 2004a). Those groups that stayed help explain the cultural and linguistical diversity present, where 13 distinct linguistic families can be found, alongside eight isolated languages that do not appear to have any linguistic relationship to other documented languages (2004a:3-4). Additionally, as Sichra (2009b) points out, another interesting feature is that the territory of modern-day Colombia was located in the periphery of the Inca Empire, allowing many communities to remain culturally distant from the Inca culture that otherwise spread in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador or Peru (2009b:605).

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the linguistic families throughout the country, and it also mentions the number of languages that comprise each family. However, it is worth highlighting that different sources classify Indigenous languages and linguistic families differently, and the classification tends to vary slightly depending on the author. The differences can be explained as a result of research projects on the topic, as ties between languages are either found or disproved by in-depth linguistic studies. Figure 2 also includes two families named “Criollos”, which refer to the three native languages of Colombia that are not Indigenous: Palenque Creole, San Andrés Creole and Romani.

As for the 65 Indigenous languages, these are (in alphabetical order): Achagua, Andoque, Awapit, Bará, Barasano, Barí Ara, Bora, Cabiari, Carapana, Carijona, Cocama, Cofán, Cuiba, Curripaco, Damana, Desano, Embera, Ette Naka, Hitnu, Guayabero, Ika, Inga, Kakua, Kamsá, Kichwa, Kogui, Koreguaje, Kubeo, Kuna Tule, Macuna, Miraña, Muinane, Namtrik, Nasa-Yuwe, Nonuya, Nukak, Ocaina, Piapoco, Piaroa, Piratapuyo, Pisamira, Puinave, Sáliba, Sikuani, Siona, Siriano, Taiwano, Tanimuca, Tariano, Tatuyo, Tikuna, Tinigua, Tucano, Tucuná, Tuyuca, Uitoto, Uwa, Wanano, Wayuunaiki, Wounaan, Yagua, Yanuro, Yuhup, Yukpa, Yuruti (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia 2015).

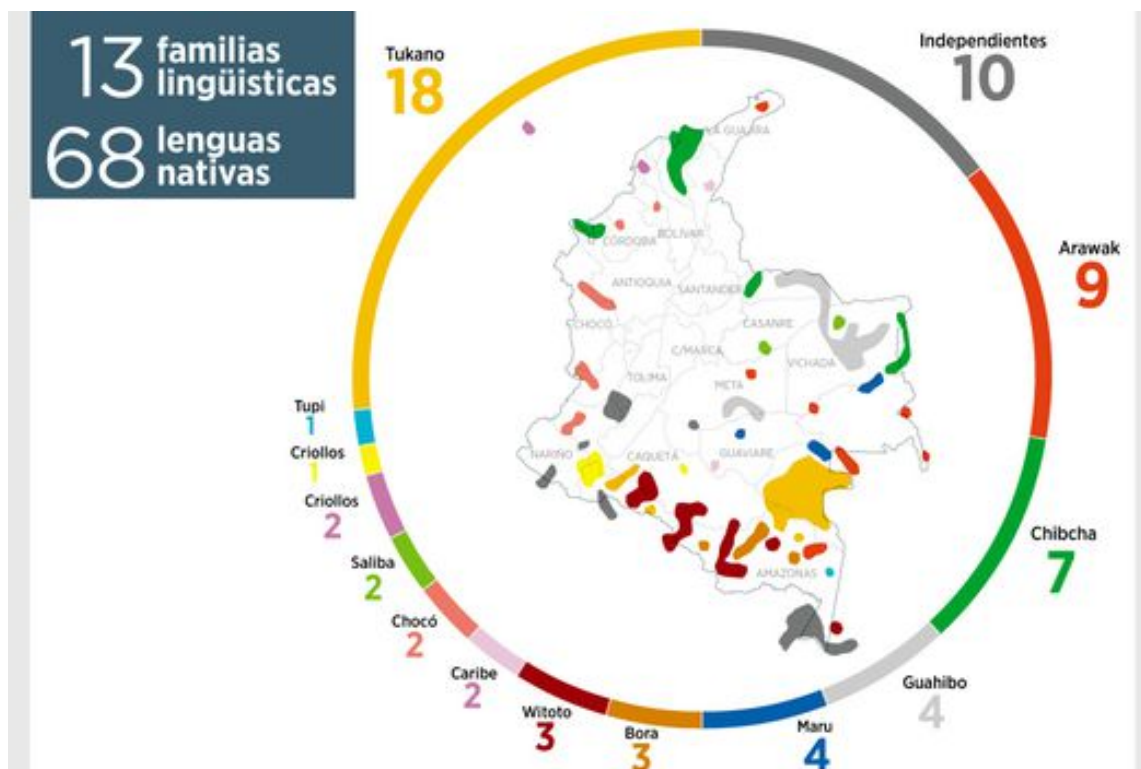


Figure 2: Linguistic families and their distribution in Colombia (Avella Bermúdez 2014).

As can be seen in Figure 2, most linguistic families are small and concentrated in one region, with the exception of the Chibcha and the Arawak families, which spread from the Caribbean Region to the Orinoquía and the Amazon. The Chibcha family is also present in some Central American countries like Panamá, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and its two biggest languages in Colombia are Kogui and Ika, found in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in the Caribbean Region with more than 10.000 speakers each (Landaburu 2004a). On the other hand, the Arawak family is present in other South American countries like Venezuela, Brazil and Peru, and its biggest language in Colombia is Wayuunaiki in the northernmost part of Colombia. Wayuunaiki is spoken by more than 100.000 people and it is by far the biggest language in the Arawak family, as the next language in number of speakers, Curripaco, has close to 7.000 speakers only (2004a:5).

In comparison, even though the Tukano family is comprised of 18 languages, the number of speakers of each language is small. Around 30.000 people in total speak a language belonging to the Tukano family (Landaburu 2004a). As for the isolated languages, named “Independientes” in Figure 2, most of them also have few speakers in Colombia, with the exception of Nasa-Yuwe, which is spoken by more than 100.000 people in the Andean Region of Cauca, located in southwestern Colombia (2004a:7).

According to Landaburu (2004a), other languages with more than 10.000 speakers are: Inga of the Quechua family (classified as isolated in Figure 2), spoken by around 18.000 people in the southwestern department of Nariño; Namtrik of the Barbacoa family (classified as isolated in Figure 2), with close to 20.000 speakers in the department of Cauca; Awapit of the Barbacoa family (classified as isolated in Figure 2), spoken by 13.000 people in the department of Nariño; Embera of the Chocó family, located in the Pacific Region and spoken by more than 70.000 people; and Sikuaní of the Guahibo family, spoken by more than 20.000 people in the Orinoquía Region (2004a:6-8).

One of the only features common to all Indigenous languages, is the lack of a traditional writing system, although some alphabets have been developed in recent years to provide education using Indigenous languages (González de Pérez 2010:13). Additionally, the different linguistic families do not have much else in common apart from the limited number of speakers of each language, which is reminiscent of the sociolinguistic landscape of the precolonial period (Landaburu 2004b). This cannot really be ignored because the circumstances of European colonization are still the key to understanding the linguistic circumstances on the entire American continent, being in part responsible for the current demographic distribution. As mentioned by Landaburu, a strong process of cultural intermixing known as *mestizaje* took place during the colonial period and, hence, Colombian identity was not as tied to either the European nor the Indigenous ancestry of the population. This allowed for the survival of many Indigenous groups and languages, as they were not as opposed to the coexisting of the two groups (2004b).

This does not mean that the process of conquest and colonization was a peaceful endeavor. Morales Gómez (1995) describes the process as an ethnocidal one, framing *mestizaje* as the loss of Indigenous identity, which ultimately led to the gradual decrease of the population (1995:205-206). This continued even beyond the independence from Spain, which for the Indigenous population represented the opposite effect to liberation (Calle Restrepo 1995). The new republican governments saw the Indigenous population as an obstacle to the progress and modernization of the country and tried to assimilate them and take advantage of their underprivileged position. Arguably, this attitude still permeates the Colombian territory and Indigenous peoples continue to be socially, culturally, economically, and politically subjugated to this day (1995:210-217).

Even so, Colombia remains a multilingual and multiethnic country, even if there are no clear sociolinguistic statistics regarding individual levels of multilingualism (Landaburu 2004b). Nevertheless, the context of multilingualism in Colombia is markedly different from the European context, based on the intrinsic cultural contrast between Spanish and Indigenous languages. The differences are not merely semantic or morphosyntactic, although they are also very different at that level, but rather cultural, in the sense that Spanish speakers and Indigenous peoples convey different things in their speech. In other words, the biggest difference lies not in *how* something is said, but in *what* is said, with their language representing a tool to express their own non-Eurocentric perspectives (2004b).

There are certainly many examples pertaining to specific differences between Spanish and any given Indigenous language, just as there are many specific characteristics that are part of every single Indigenous community in Colombia. Within such a diverse landscape, it seems then that no one generalization can cover the entire spectrum of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous languages in Colombia (González de Pérez 2010). The different geographical and climatic conditions mean that diversity permeates every aspect of the life of Indigenous peoples, ranging from culturally diverse clothing and construction methods to diverse economic methods of sustenance. Generally speaking, though, there are some circumstances that apply to a big portion of the Indigenous population. As can be seen in Figure 3, the Colombian population is concentrated in the Andean and Caribbean Regions, whereas Figure 4 shows that most Indigenous territories are primarily found in the periphery of the country, some of them even forming a supranational community tied to ancestral territories not necessarily corresponding to modern-day borders (2010:11-12).

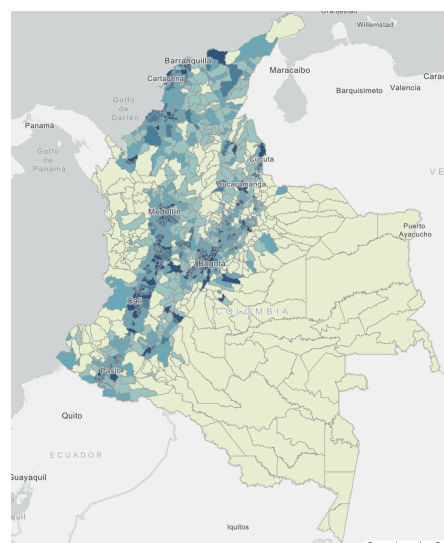


Figure 3: Population density in Colombia (Populationdata 2022).

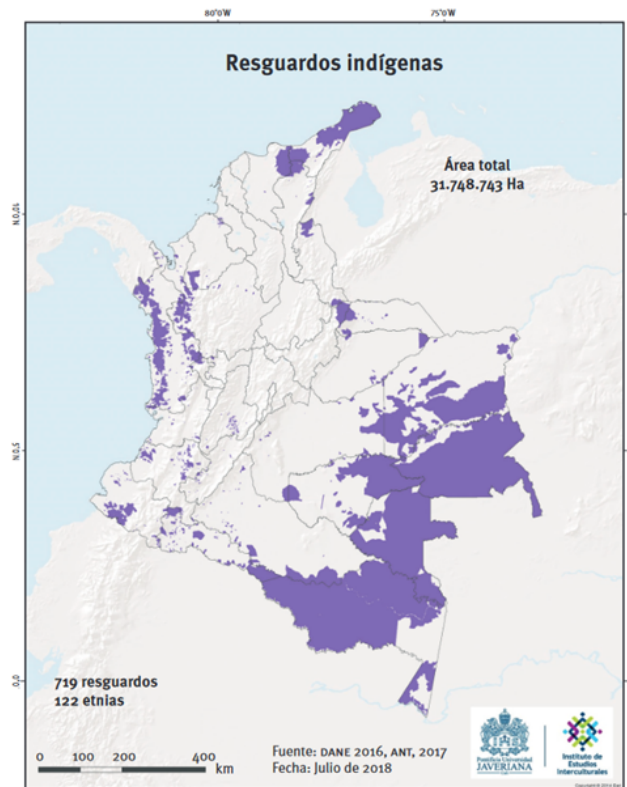


Figure 4: Indigenous territories in Colombia (Duarte & Castaño 2020).

Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples have been greatly affected by the armed conflict in Colombia, and it is estimated that at least 40.000 members of Indigenous communities have been forcefully displaced (Ardila 2010). The war in the country has historically taken place in regions with a high percentage of Indigenous inhabitants and it has certainly had a negative impact on the cultural development of the Indigenous population, making it difficult for them to maintain their cultural identity and language when they are victims of forced displacement. Many of them have sought refuge in the cities and this has led to an increase of the urban Indigenous population, creating new dynamics that have managed to integrate Indigenous culture and language into urban contexts, albeit to a limited extent (2010:35-36).

That being said, the scope of this chapter would be far exceeded by an in-depth description of each Colombian Indigenous community and language. Instead, after this brief overview of the Indigenous population and some topics transversal to most of them, the next section of this chapter will be focused on the policies put forward by the Colombian state, with special attention to the language and translation policies, which unsurprisingly have not remained monolithic in the 200 years since independence from Spain.

3.2. Policy

The previous chapters have provided the background necessary to understand and contextualize Colombia and its policy making. The use of policies as a way to ensure the proper functioning of society has indeed represented a challenge for the country, thanks to its diversity and the heterogeneous nature of its inhabitants. That diversity has not always been regarded positively and whether or not it is encouraged and strengthened has certainly been a point of contention throughout the centuries. In the 200 years since the founding of the Republic of Colombia as an independent state from the Spanish Crown, the policies regarding Indigenous peoples and their languages have changed massively, albeit in a relatively short and recent period of time.

As was briefly mentioned in the second chapter, the early stages of nation-building after independence were centered around the idea of language unity as a tool to unify the newly formed countries. These ideals of language as a way to bridge diversity, coupled with the historically influenced attitude towards Indigenous peoples, cemented a monolingual and monocultural policy that carried over well into the 20th century. In fact, the ethnic and cultural diversity of Colombia was officially recognized as late as 1991, the year when a new constitution replaced the previous one, dating to 1886 (Ardila 2010:30).

The 1886 constitution was the first constitution in the country, and it relied on both Spanish and Catholicism as the unifying factors amidst an extremely diverse population (Ardila 2010). There, the existence of Indigenous languages was not recognized, and subsequent assimilationist laws were passed, seeking to force Indigenous peoples to embrace the Catholic and Spanish way of life (2010:30). For instance, Landaburu (2004b) points out that Indigenous peoples were referred to as savages in the laws of the late 19th century, with the obligation to be civilized by Catholic missionaries. They had no right to self-government for as long as they were not yet civilized, and once they were considered to be, they had the same amount of autonomy as an underage citizen, irrespective of age (2004b).

Considering the above, the policies imposed by the Spanish Crown were seemingly more tolerant of a multilingual and multicultural society. The constitution of 1886 is then a clear reflection of the nationalist ideals surrounding the independence movement in the American colonies. As was previously mentioned, language was seen as a medium around which the new Colombian identity could be centered, giving unity to all levels of a country that probably

had more differences than similarities. Within this context, multilingualism represented a threat to the national identity and thus had to be forcefully restricted. And yet, such a restrictive policy was rather unsuccessful in completely achieving its goals, given the continued existence of Indigenous languages in all of the Colombian territory.

Amongst other factors, Indigenous peoples undoubtedly played an active role in the continued use of their languages and did not sit idly by to wait for their full assimilation into the Spanish speaking Colombian society. As Calle Restrepo (1995) elucidates, in some regions of the country there were precedents of opposition to the colonial rule going back to the 16th century, which would later materialize as isolated movements of Indigenous resistance. Those movements had but a relatively small reach and it was not until the late 1940s that another organized movement surged, influenced by an indigenist congress celebrated in Mexico. The movement was short-lived due to the political reality of the country, namely a violent power struggle between liberals and conservatives. The violence that was felt throughout the country had a profound effect in every aspect of Colombia's development, and Indigenous movements were no exception, organizing into bigger movements by the 1960s (1995:210-218).

By then, Indigenous peoples started to claim the linguistic rights denied to them first by the Spanish conquistadors and later the criollos, and in the 1970s those claims were followed by attempts to reclaim their ancestral lands (Guerrero 2009). Additionally, demands of acknowledgement of both their languages and their cultures were made, and later on in that decade, they enjoyed some success in the area of education, managing to obtain recognition of their right to be educated in their own languages with a curriculum appropriate for their needs and specific contexts (2009:14-15). That renewed interest in Indigenous languages, coupled with the new need of material for schooling in the native languages, led to the idea of developing a writing system for languages that otherwise had a purely oral tradition (Landaburu 2004b). The 1980s also sparked many investigations centered around Indigenous languages and research centers were created for linguists to specialize in, and study, Indigenous languages exclusively (2004b).

As can be gleaned from those examples, Indigenous peoples were not passive actors, and even while operating under a constitution that accepted only Spanish language and Catholicism, they managed to gain recognition and visibility in the eyes of a country that nearly regarded them as extinct (Landaburu 2004b). This coincided with a worldwide wave of rethinking the political and cultural sensitivities regarding minorities, especially Indigenous peoples,

and the treatment towards them was reconsidered while the general attitude became more sympathetic. Simultaneously, Colombia was rapidly approaching a crisis that reached its critical point in 1990, after struggling with an internal armed conflict with the guerrillas, narcoterrorism and drug trafficking, and an unprecedented institutional crisis, calling into question the constitutional order from 1886. A new political constitution was to be elaborated in agreement with vast swathes of the population and thanks to the work done in the previous decades, the Indigenous peoples were able to have a say in the elaboration of the new political constitution (2004b).

The new political constitution was made official in 1991 and was drafted in a joint effort stemming from a National Constituent Assembly, gathering members of society that so far had had little sway in the political arena of the country (Landaburu 1997). The result was therefore a radically different political constitution, one that was agreed upon by numerous and varied groups and associations as part of a public and open debate. It was no longer centered entirely around political structure and nation-building, but rather emphasized the social and cultural concerns of the diverse members of the Assembly and granted many fundamental rights for the first time. Indigenous communities and territories were also included as deserving of rights, and thus, for the first time, were officially granted positive rights by the Colombian legal system (1997:109-110).

Indeed, the political constitution that resulted from the Assembly represented a complete transformation of the official Colombian stance pertaining to Indigenous peoples. For one, the Constitution lists a series of fundamental principles that for the first time recognizes the diversity of the country, Indigenous peoples included (Corte Constitucional 2015). It is significant that Indigenous peoples are recognized in the fundamental principles, because for the first time their presence and existence are not seen as temporary, but rather as a permanent and fundamental part of society. The most important articles regarding them are Art 7 and Art 8, where the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country is acknowledged and the State pledges to protect it. Much more important for language and translation policy however is Art 10, which states that Castilian is the official language of the country alongside Indigenous languages, with the caveat that the official status only applies within their ancestral territories. It also states that education shall be bilingual for communities with their own linguistical tradition, meaning a bilingual education in Spanish and an Indigenous language.

This recognition is certainly a departure from the previous policies, even dating back to the colonial period and the policies discussed in the last chapter. Whereas Indigenous languages had a utilitarian nature under the Spanish Crown, they are now accorded rights and are seen as worthy of protection, regardless of their practical usefulness. Also important to mention is the inclusion of bilingual education as part of the fundamental principles of the Constitution, acknowledging the key role education plays in maintaining cultural identity and avoiding assimilation. Those guiding principles reflect the notions behind LHR mentioned in chapter one, and are further articulated in Art 68 by stating that ethnic groups shall receive an education that develops and respects their cultural identity. Culture then plays a more relevant role than it did in the previous constitution, recognizing cultural differences and promoting its protection. Furthermore, Art 70 names culture in all its forms as the foundation of national identity and promotes the exploration, dissemination, and development of the cultural values of the country. In contrast to the policies imposed after independence, the Spanish language is no longer the tool of nation-building, but rather culture is.

In addition to the right granted to receive bilingual education, Art 13 also reflects the LHR discussion. It states that every person is free and equal in the eyes of the law, worthy of the same rights, protection, liberties, and opportunities. No one shall be discriminated against because of their sex, race, origin, language, religion, or opinions, and the State shall adopt measures in favor of discriminated or marginalized groups. Art 13 directly mentions language as a potential source of discrimination and hence exposes the same concern about linguisticism described previously. Of course, the dominant position of Spanish means that at least in terms of language, this article is targeted at non-Spanish speakers and could thus be considered to be a provision to ensure the LHR of the linguistic minorities in the country.

Considering the above, the language policy found in the 1991 Constitution recognizes the linguistic needs of the population, and yet Indigenous languages are not an official language throughout the whole Colombian territory. They are to be tolerated and shall not be a source of discrimination, but their official status is relegated to their own territories, also codified by the Constitution. Art 329 stipulates that Indigenous territories must be delimited by the government and representatives of the Indigenous communities, and they shall be considered communal property. Those territories shall be inalienable, imprescriptible⁶, and unseizable, as stated by Art 63, and shall be directly governed by the community and according to its own traditions

⁶ Something that cannot be taken away, exempt from prescription.

and ways, as mentioned in Art 330. Besides, Indigenous communities shall have their own jurisdiction according to their own norms, which shall be managed by their own authorities, as stated in Art 246. It is within those territories that Indigenous languages enjoy the same official status as Spanish, while outside of them the country retains its previous monolingual stance.

There are many other articles in the Constitution that might be relevant for Indigenous peoples, but for the scope of this thesis, the articles explained above suffice to contextualize Colombia's constitutional position regarding language use. Interestingly, the topic of translation has been absent so far, and indeed there is no mention of it whatsoever in the 1991 Constitution. But as was explained in the first chapter, the lack of explicit mention of a translation policy does not mean that there is none. Moreover, the Political Constitution is not the only source of policy making but rather serves as the backbone of the law, which can implement policies at a later stage.

Be that as it may, the 1991 Constitution implicitly sets forth a translation regime evocative of the regime of complete institutional monolingualism explained before. Given that Indigenous languages are only official within their territories, and bilingual education with an Indigenous language is foreseen only for Indigenous communities, multilingual interactions can hardly take place outside of Indigenous territories. The regime tolerates the use of native languages but does not allow for meaningful interactions outside of their controlled spaces, where Spanish remains the only language of communication. There is no mention of translation of any kind because it presupposes that multilingual individuals will also speak Spanish and thus the need for translation into their languages is not imperative.

Paradoxically, a major translation project took place in the wake of the 1991 Political Constitution. It was considered of significant importance to inform the Indigenous population about the completely new stance towards them, and a project that partially translated the Constitution into seven Indigenous languages began (Landaburu 1997). Thanks to research that had taken place in previous decades, Indigenous languages were well documented and therefore, the main difficulty in the project was not so much linguistic as much as it was cultural. Investigators had some experience creating neologisms and adapting existing words to use in Indigenous languages, but to translate the constitution meant to introduce a type of text almost unknown to the native culture. What is more, the text expressed a reality rooted in a perspective they did not share, and thus the translation did not have to deal with language as much as it had

to express an Eurocentrically-rooted point of view in a non-Eurocentric language (1997:111-112).

As part of the team that translated the Constitution and a member of the Indigenous community, Zalabata (1997) mentions the challenges faced in that regard. To begin with, the structure of the Constitution exhibited a system of order and hierarchies far apart from the Indigenous thought process and system of logic. Besides, they already had their own laws and rules rooted in their culture and it raised the question of how to frame the Constitution in relation to their existing cultural traditions. In Zalabata's case, the result was not a translation pretending to fit the native perspective, but rather a tool to help them better understand the dominant political order and the hierarchies of Colombia (1997:135-136). Undoubtedly, this situation was not restricted to Zalabata and the translators for the other languages most likely faced similar difficulties, having to deal with their own linguistic and cultural differences.

Still, translators did not work alone because, as Landaburu (1997) explains, the translation process was a collaborative effort and it consisted of two alternating stages. First the whole translation team would meet to plan, discuss, and clarify methods and results, sometimes assisted by specialized jurists. Then, linguists and translators would prepare and discuss the translation with the Indigenous community, since their support was considered of vital importance, and once that was completed the cycle would start again. After one and a half years of alternating stages, the project was completed and a total of 40 articles were translated, namely those referring to fundamental rights in general and the rights of the Indigenous communities specifically (1997:113). The decision to limit the translations to those articles directly concerning them is arguably a practical one, since otherwise the process would have taken longer, and some topics were probably not particularly interesting to the Indigenous communities. But it is still interesting to point out that to translate only fundamental rights is evocative of instrumental rights and the right to translation mentioned in international resolutions, where the main goal of translation is to fully inform about rights or other legal topics but not much else.

The end result as described by Landaburu (1997) is quite compelling and worth taking a closer look at from a translation studies perspective. The translation of the 40 articles was made into a separate book for each of the seven chosen languages, accompanied by a recording. The book consisted of, first, an introduction with letters and texts from Indigenous authorities, the President, the coordinator of the project, and translators, written and presented in both

languages. Second, the central part comprised the translated articles, followed by the original Spanish text. Third, a glossary with 50 important Spanish terms was added, with a corresponding translation into the Indigenous language. Fourth, the translation of 15 of the most important articles was explained in detail, and fifth, recordings which consisted of every article being read aloud and explained in the Indigenous language (1997:113-114).

Parts three, four and five are deserving of a more detailed exploration, as they exemplify the cultural challenges mentioned before. The translation of the terms in the glossary included three distinct layers (Landaburu 1997). The first one was the translation of the Spanish term into the Indigenous language, followed by the second layer that was also a translation, but this time into Spanish. Here, the Indigenous term was broken down into its semantic components and each of those were translated into Spanish literally. The third layer was then a grammatically correct version of the second layer (1997:113-114).

As for the fourth part, the detailed translation, it followed the same process as the one used for the terms in the glossary (Landaburu 1997). In this part, every article was retranslated into Spanish, and the end result allowed non-speakers to be indirectly privy to the forms of conceptualization and expression of indigenous peoples. Lastly, the recordings comprising the fifth part were conceived as a supporting tool to make the translation more accessible and facilitate comprehension. After the articles were read, they were explained using metaphors, comparisons, etc., and the recording allowed for an expression and legitimation of linguistic variety, since the speakers did not always speak the same variety of the language as the translator (1997:114).

On the whole, the decision to add that sort of commentary next to the translation was probably one that helped the project achieve its main goal, that is, to provide the Indigenous communities with access to the Constitution and inform them of their newly acquired rights. But surely, the most interesting part of the project was how the cultural difference was exemplified and framed. There was a conscious decision on the part of the translators to expound on the distinct ways in which Indigenous languages structure the thoughts of their users. By retranslating the translation into Spanish, the different structures became apparent, and it became clear that the language pair usually does not share a deep conceptual framework. Those translations were challenging because Indigenous peoples participating in the project had to reflect on both social orders and had to find how to appropriate and use the discursive forms of the

dominant other, with the linguistic aspect being almost secondary to that needed stage of reflection.

Of course, this is the case of translation in any given language pair, given that no two languages are completely equivalent or have a direct correspondence for every word or concept. However, many languages do share a certain way of structuring their thoughts and have a shared background that lends itself to some degree of mutual agreement in terms of *what* is said, even if the *how* proves difficult. The translation project as presented is then a window into another cultural perspective. By making the conscious decision to exemplify how different that perspective is, it allows for a more multilingual and multicultural interaction between speakers and non-speakers, besides effectively informing the Indigenous population about their rights.

Nonetheless, as has been repeatedly seen, official policies do not always mirror reality and official policies are not always implemented or taken into consideration in everyday practices. Ardila (2010) acknowledges that the Constitution gave Indigenous peoples the opportunity to self-govern, strengthen their cultural practices, and gain the visibility that had been sorely lacking in previous legislation. Yet at that point in time, almost 20 years after the Political Constitution took effect, many of the actions proposed in its articles were still far from materializing. Ardila identifies bilingual education as one of the most poorly implemented aspects and cites the lack of appropriate pedagogical tools in the Indigenous language as one of the many factors responsible (2010:30).

To be sure, there are many difficulties in implementing a bilingual system for the education of Indigenous children. While it is true that the Constitution sets a policy, it does so only in a general sense and does not design a way to implement it, working mostly as an outline that has to be further detailed if it is to be followed. In this case, granting the right to a bilingual education does not address the obstacles it entails and thus, by itself fails to properly translate into everyday practices. To name an example, in the last chapter it was explained how the education Indigenous peoples already receive tends to be subpar when compared to other educational institutions. If that is the case in a monolingual environment, it is hardly surprising that schools struggle with offering bilingual education under a multilingual policy. For that matter, another point to consider is the fact that Indigenous languages in Colombia have only recently begun to have a writing system, meaning that there is not much teaching material available to begin with.

Besides those practical concerns, Landaburu (2004b) also proposes that even if the legal framework of the Constitution recognizes multilingualism, that recognition will hardly be decisive without an effort coming from the Indigenous peoples themselves. According to Landaburu, Indigenous peoples have shown a desire for their language to have more visibility and to be more valuable, to be more dignified. For many, this means using their languages in prestigious meetings, hearing Indigenous languages on a radio station, having books written in their language. But it does not necessarily mean that they seek to take control of the structures of the dominant powers. They intend rather to be accepted and respected in their differences. Hence, Landaburu argues that education is an ambiguous topic because it is not an institution considered important within their traditional cultural practices. Schools are a necessary evil to learn about that other world and be able to relate to it, but they are not of much use outside of it. A comprehensive policy should then attempt to understand the social and cultural reality of the concerned population, otherwise it would only be an empty proclamation of tolerance and recognition without much implementation in everyday practices (2004b).

On the whole, it seems clear that the Colombian government has had trouble implementing the policy established in the 1991 Constitution. Whether it is due to practical reasons or to apprehension from within the Indigenous communities, bilingual education for Indigenous peoples remains underdeveloped and has not yet fulfilled its potential in terms of granting language rights. Yet as García León & García León (2012) reveal, Colombia's efforts regarding bilingualism are not restricted to Indigenous languages and there is a parallel policy pertaining to bilingualism with foreign languages. Clearly, both policies have differentiated linguistic goals, but they are both embedded in the Colombian context and are not completely independent from one another (2012:49).

According to García León & García León (2012), the first indication of foreign languages being explicitly taught in Colombia dates back to the first half of the 19th century. More than a hundred years later, during the 1970s, both English and French were even decreed as mandatory for the upper grades in schools, and in the 1980s and 1990s, English continued to spread as part of joint campaigns from the government and English-speaking organizations. After the National Constituent Assembly of 1991, though, a new law was needed to properly account for the new Constitution, and a general law of education was drafted (2012:54-55).

To briefly summarize, the Republic of Colombia issued law 115 of 1994 that designates the general norms that are to be followed in the country in terms of education. In reference to

bilingualism, it clearly differentiates between education for Indigenous peoples and foreign language acquisition, with the former receiving the name of “ethnoeducation”. In that respect, the law remains largely general and reinforces the main points found in the Constitution, only briefly mentioning that the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country should be integrated into school’s curricula. As for foreign language acquisition, foreign languages are mentioned as part of the competences taught in primary school and are included as one of the mandatory subjects of basic education.

A comparison of both language policies definitely allows for an interesting discussion, framed within the ideological context explained in previous chapters. Guerrero (2009) comments that there is a lack of coherence between Colombia’s sociolinguistic reality and the campaigns and projects advanced by the government, because the imposed policy of foreign language acquisition is detrimental to the stated goals of the campaigns, namely, to improve the quality of education and to favor the less privileged groups of society. In particular, Guerrero sees the national programs imposing English as having a particularly negative effect on Indigenous languages, arguing that it affects “the value, recognition, use, study, teaching and learning of these and all the other languages different from English that share the Colombian territory” (2009:12). According to Guerrero, the main problem lies in how Indigenous languages continue to be overshadowed, first by monolingual ideologies and now by majority languages such as English (2009:12).

The common discourse around bilingualism in Colombia does not include Indigenous languages and is attributed to the acquisition of a foreign majority language (García León & García León 2012). Arguably, bilingualism is conceived only in relation to English, it being the most widely taught foreign language, and the realities of bilingual Indigenous peoples are thus erased from public consciousness. Indeed, after law 115, bilingual education with Indigenous languages began being referred to as ethnoeducation, and members of Indigenous communities fluent in their own language and Spanish, or even another Indigenous language, were no longer considered as bilingual by the common discourse. This limited view of bilingualism was the one advanced by governmental policies, and its consequences could be argued to go against the guiding principles of equality of the 1991 Political Constitution (2012:57-58).

García León & García León (2012) explain that the discourse around bilingualism presented by the government perpetuates a phenomenon of language stratification not dissimilar to the dynamics of prestige languages discussed previously. In this case, English is assigned a

higher position than any other language and it is assumed that it offers the best work-related opportunities, effectively giving it more status and value than the others. It is legitimized as the language of science, communication, and the global stage, while the others are implicitly characterized as being the opposite. Linguicism comes into play and the undervalued languages are discriminated against at the level of policy making (2012:58-59).

Continuing this line of thought, García León & García León (2012) portray the resulting system as an elitist one, as only those with enough resources are able to attain the type of bilingualism promoted. In this respect, Colombia is not different from other Latin American countries, and it suffers from the same educational gaps that were described previously, born out of the heavily stratified public and private schools. Whereas private schools promote and teach globally known languages and are supported by international institutions, public schools are underfunded and lack the resources to properly implement a bilingual system for Indigenous peoples. Within this framework, bilingual education in the country operates differentially for foreign and native languages, the former being prestigious and visible, and the latter being underdeveloped and invisible (2012:59-62).

Once again, language policy seems to closely reflect the power asymmetries in the country, valuing the languages of the powerful and disregarding those of the powerless (Guerero 2009). The hold English has on public discourse and policy making is reminiscent of Eurocentrism, as it is associated with modernity and power in direct opposition to the second-class treatment the native languages receive. As a result, proficiency in a native language in Colombia is not typically acknowledged as being proficient in a second language, and outside of the Indigenous population the languages are not promoted and there is lack of interest regarding them (2009:21-22). Given the above, it seems clear that the linguistic rights accorded to Indigenous peoples in the 1991 Constitution failed to completely materialize on their own. As García León and García León (2012) state, there were indeed many instances when the articles of the Constitution were appropriately applied. There were however others left unaddressed, and a so called “languages law” was drafted to better address the subject (2012:53).

Law 1381 of 2010 issued by the Republic of Colombia, commonly referred to as the “languages law” or “ley de lenguas”, is stated to develop Art 7, Art 8, Art 10 and Art 70 of the Constitution, as well as the law that ratified ILO’s Convention No.169 in 1991. According to Art 1, the goal of the law is to guarantee the recognition, protection, and development of Indigenous peoples’ linguistic rights, both at the individual and the collective level, while also

promoting the use and development of native languages. Similarly, Art 2 pledges to preserve, safeguard, and strengthen them, in order to reaffirm and promote the multiethnic and pluricultural nature of Colombia. Likewise relevant for the topics exposed throughout this thesis are Art 4 and Art 5, as they refer to the right to not be discriminated against and the right to use the language freely in all of the national territory.

In a general sense, those basic principles of the law are but an expansion of the ones proposed and implied by the Constitution. There is mention of varied topics that fall into the scope of Indigenous languages like education, media, audiovisual material, or revitalization, to name some examples, and there is also explicit mention of the active role of the State in implementing the law and the projects consigned therein. The institution designated as guarantor and coordinator in charge of the correct implementation of the law is the Ministry of Culture, which is tasked with defining and executing a coherent, sustainable, and integral policy to protect and strengthen native languages.

Apart from the aforementioned policies, Art 7, Art 8, Art 9, are markedly important for translation policy. They are the first explicit mention of interpreting and are an example of instrumental rights, as they are a right insofar as they allow for the fulfilment of another right. Indeed, law 1381 only foresees interpreting under three distinct circumstances: while in contact with the justice system, the public administration, and the health system.

For the justice system, Art 7 specifies that in any interactions, Indigenous peoples have the right to use their own language and if they so wish, the responsible authorities shall provide them with interpreters and attorneys knowledgeable about the language and culture in question, free of cost. To do so, government institutions shall work with regional and Indigenous authorities to take the needed measures to progressively grant this right. In turn, Art 8 is similarly worded and covers interactions with public administration institutions, again stating that the competent authorities shall provide an interpreter for those who request one. Additionally, there shall be material available in Indigenous languages to ensure that the population is properly informed about laws, regulations, services, and projects regarding them. Lastly, Art 9 states that interpreters shall also provide assistance if requested, when health services are needed. Appropriate measures shall again be taken by governmental institutions, and both public and private health providers, to satisfactorily grant this right.

These articles closely follow the parameters set by the ILO Convention No.169, granting the right to participate in legal and administrative proceedings and to have access to health

services. They also bear a resemblance to the UN Declaration, not only in terms of interpreting but also regarding the stance on diversity and fundamental rights and freedoms. Undoubtedly, the law is much more specific than the international resolutions and addresses specific matters of the Colombian context. Still, it remains vague on some crucial topics and could potentially allow for minimalistic approaches.

For instance, in the case of interpreting, even though the reach of the articles and the settings are well defined and delimited, it is not clear how they can be realistically applied. As has been repeatedly noted, the Indigenous population is highly diverse and heterogeneous and to provide interpreting on request, in any language, at any time, would indeed require an immense effort from a logistical point of view. It seems implausible that full compliance can be guaranteed in unregulated and spontaneous interactions, like urgent medical care, for example, unless every medical center and health provider has at its disposal an on-call interpreter for every Indigenous language in the country. This translation policy is perhaps feasible at a local level, but the right can hardly be guaranteed at the national level, in the face of the sheer number of potential languages needed amongst a primarily monolingual population. Equally important to consider are the interpreters themselves, as the level of professionalization goes unmentioned. Art 21 states that the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education shall create training programs for interpreters of Indigenous languages, but it is not clear what that training should consist of or if there are any regulations or standards applied for the training or the profession itself.

Whatever the case may be, information regarding this topic is not easy to come by and there is no centralized source of information about the interpreters and translators, be it how many there are or the languages they work with. As for translations, on the section of the website of the Ministry of Culture (n.d.a) dedicated to native languages there are some publicly available translations of some laws, although the criteria of selection for both languages and laws are unclear. There is however an extensive list of translations for Colombia's 2016 Peace Agreement, with a written version translated into 43 Indigenous languages and audios for 16 others, with only six languages remaining without translation. There is also pedagogical material explaining the Agreement in 16 Indigenous languages, although yet again it is unknown why these languages were chosen above the others. Lastly, the website also includes publications in Indigenous languages, studies about each language, and information about revitalization projects.

In analyzing the language and translation policy of Colombia, there are some things worth mentioning in regard to the website. To begin with, the information on the website appears to be largely outdated. The information about the revitalization projects dates back to 2014, the last law to be translated was drafted in 2013, and there are many links that, at least during the process of writing this thesis, do not work. For instance, the audios available for the Peace Agreement were not accessible, nor were any of the links pointing to Indigenous languages in the sidebar. Other links with presumably more information about the work of the Ministry of Culture regarding Indigenous languages are also inaccessible, and it is unclear where that information can be found outside of the website. There is however another translation project in another section of the Ministry of Culture's page (n.d.b), namely the translation of the measures taken against COVID-19 into nine Indigenous languages in both oral and written form. Once again, though, the criteria for choosing those nine languages are not explained.

Given the above, it is worth considering the actual reach of law 1381 and its policies. As was mentioned before, the Ministry of Culture was designated as the main institution responsible for the coordination and the execution of the projects needed to achieve its goals. It seems only logical that the Ministry should also be the central source of information in that regard, and yet there is a lack of transparency and information on the subject. Undoubtedly, the state of the website is not necessarily a reflection of the work being done by the Ministry and it cannot be categorically stated that no progress has been made since the website was regularly updated. In fact, revitalization and documentation projects appear to be rather complete and varied, as other institutions also participate in the efforts of granting visibility to the native languages (Instituto Caro y Cuervo n.d.).

Still, translation and interpreting do not seem to be considered as relevant and there is barely any publicly available information. Whether it is due to a lack of interest in informing the public or a lack of work being done, is of course impossible to say, but it is indeed worth wondering about in light of the topic at hand. Having said that, another aspect of the law that warrants mentioning in this context is the training program for translation and interpreting. While writing this thesis, I could find only three mentions of it besides the law itself, but whether this is a consequence of a lack of training programs, or a lack of readily available information, is up for speculation. Be that as it may, the first course for translation and interpretation apparently took place in 2014 and lasted three weeks, with no mention of languages, number of participants, requirements, or results (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia 2014). The second mention of the training program was by the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de

Educación de Colombia 2019) and in this case, a meeting of experts, Indigenous peoples and researchers took place, and a course was held simultaneously. The translators and interpreters exchanged information about their experiences, and strategies to implement the training program as a whole were discussed. Last but not least, the most recent mention states that the first steps towards a qualification program for interpreters were taken in 2020 (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia 2022:73). The program is expected to achieve full implementation in a maximum of 10 years, and it is expected to provide coverage in all languages, although no details are given regarding the planning or the implementation of the program.

That goal is consigned in a 10-year plan to manage Indigenous languages, which was presented in February 2022 in accordance with law 1381 (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia 2022). The 10-year plan serves as a strategic guideline to comply with the objectives of the law and it reinforces the policies established there, revolving around 16 principles. They can be summarized as being principles centered around dialogue and integration of the Indigenous peoples' cultures, beliefs, and institutions. They highlight their rights to maintain their own cultural practices and they also grant them autonomy and authority according to their own laws, customs and interests (2022:51-52).

This 10-year plan contains specific strategic measures to support the policies established by law 1381, but it is still too early to accurately assess its viability or its results. In 10 years' time, further studies will be able to analyze the success of the strategic plan and perhaps identify points of contention unmentioned here, but without the benefit of hindsight, an assessment of the strategic measures goes beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, the fact that language and translation policy continue to play a role in the agenda of the Colombian State should allow for further investigations in the field to take place at any future stage.

In any case, regardless of the explicit policies presented and implemented by the State, it seems likely that unless the population overcomes its ideological biases against Indigenous peoples, inclusive policies will not be completely reflected in everyday practices. As Guerrero (2009) points out:

It is easy today to associate indigenous peoples and most Afro-Colombians with poverty and backwardness and to blame them for that, but if we look closer and carefully, we can see that the causes of their disadvantaged situation have profound roots embedded in our history and in an ideology of superiority vs. inferiority (2009:22).

As a result, Calvo (2010) explains that Indigenous languages lack social prestige, are weakened and displaced by migration into the cities, and face constant aggression, despite the fact that the laws of the country pledge to protect and safeguard linguistic and ethnical diversity. In short, they appear to be unable to properly counterbalance the assimilation processes taking place since the colonial period (2010:41).

The policies also appear to be inefficient in addressing discrimination, as was reported by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights 2020). In point number 16, the Committee expresses concerns about the structural and historical discrimination that Indigenous peoples and other minorities face, impacting their rights to health, work, political participation, and education. In particular, the Committee cites a lack of availability and accessibility of health-related services, lack of inclusion in terms of labor, lack of representation in public administration, low levels of education, and children's malnutrition (2020). Those areas of concern overlap with those of the language and translation policy, and although the Committee does not mention language specifically, it is not too difficult to find parallel issues between the two.

For instance, law 1381 includes the health sector as one of those covered by interpreting services. If, however, there is lack of availability and accessibility for Indigenous peoples, it seems rather unlikely that interpreting takes place in the way the law proposes. Alternatively, if interpreting services are indeed offered as decreed, health services still do not provide enough coverage for the population, and by extension, neither does interpreting. Similarly, the inclusion of education in the report points to either a lack of coverage or a lack of quality, which can also be extrapolated to the policy of bilingual education. Besides that, it was established in chapter one that language can be a source of discrimination and when considered alongside the ideological biases mentioned above, it seems likely that it plays an important role in the concerns raised by the Committee.

Another lens through which language and translation policies can be examined is that of the applicability and practicality of the policies. For García León & García León (2012), the policies regarding Indigenous peoples in Colombia tend to have discursive rather than pragmatic value. They have scarce details on concrete standards, guidelines, and goals of implementation and thus lack the appropriate tools to achieve their purpose (2012:62-63). In addition, some regions and cities of Colombia are linguistically diverse to such a degree that it is nearly impossible to cater to and manage all languages (Calvo 2010:44). Also worth

mentioning is the fact that some languages have very few speakers, which begs the question if it is economically sound to provide interpreting services on demand for small languages. From a LHR perspective, the cost of such an endeavor surely plays a secondary role, but it is a factor that cannot be discounted when examining policies. A thorough analysis of the costs and the benefits would exceed the scope of this paper, but for now it is something worth keeping in mind.

Also worth mentioning is that Indigenous peoples themselves and their decisions cannot be discounted, as they are not passive actors and have always played a role in the outcome of all policies. The fact that Indigenous languages are still spoken today, even after linguistically repressive policies were imposed, is a testament to their resilience and the importance of Indigenous peoples in the success, or failure, of language policies regarding them. As it happens, in contemporary Colombia some members of the Indigenous communities might prefer Spanish to their own language.

In exploring the topic, Ardila (2010) asserts that Indigenous communities find themselves in very different situations from one another, depending in great part on their own historical background and the ties they have to the general population of the country. As a consequence, it has been easier for some of them to preserve and use their language and their culture throughout the centuries, while for others language might not even be as relevant to their identity. There are therefore very different levels of cultural and linguistic assimilation within the Indigenous community at large, each specific to the particular circumstances of every community, and each allowing for different levels of bilingualism with Spanish (2010:31-32).

Nonetheless, the increased contact with dominant Spanish speaking institutions has had an impact on their way of life and in some cases has contributed to a language shift in the younger generations (Ardila 2010). In the most extreme cases, Spanish has been replacing Indigenous languages in many contexts and there has been a slow change going from complete bilingualism, to passive bilingualism in the Indigenous language, to Spanish monolingualism. Some people have even maintained that despite being bilingual, Spanish was their preferred language, or they considered Spanish to bring them more opportunities in life. For some parents, the decision to not teach their children their native language has been a practical one, not based on cultural identity but rather on economic opportunities and perceived usefulness (2010:32-34).

That being the case, the specificities of each Indigenous community are fundamental in contextualizing the policies. Whether or not a policy is applied and followed depends not only on its contents, but also on a myriad of other factors that all play a role in its shaping and its reception. With that in mind, this chapter provided an overview of the Colombian policies regarding language and translation, accompanied by a general outline of the Indigenous peoples in the country. Based on that, it could already be possible to form an opinion about Colombia's policies. And yet, this would fail to account for the actual effect policies have in everyday practices.

I consider my perspective as an outsider to be incomplete without some input from the communities themselves, seeing that just as policies do not necessarily reflect everyday practices, explicit official policies do not necessarily correspond to the needs and the wishes of the people. For this reason, the next chapter will consist primarily of two interviews that were conducted with members of Colombia's Indigenous communities, specifically the Misak in the Cauca region. However, an exploration of the Misak people is needed to properly contextualize and understand the interviews as embedded in their particular context. So far, Indigenous peoples have been mentioned in a general sense but the particular circumstances of the Misak, both social and linguistic, have been left unmentioned. The next section will therefore provide an account of the Misak of the Cauca department of Colombia, addressing linguistic, social, and historical aspects relevant to understanding the current contemporary situation and position they are faced with. These contextual details will certainly enrich the thematic analysis of the interviews, allowing for a deeper understanding of the common themes discussed throughout this paper.

3.3. Indigenous Community: Misak

One of the many indigenous peoples of Colombia are the Misak, who are located in the Andes in the southwestern department of Cauca, as can be seen in Figure 4. According to the Ministry of Culture (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia n.d.c), the Misak, or Guambianos, speak Namtrik, also known as Guambiano, Silviano, or Namui wam. As Calle Restrepo (1995) explains, it is uncertain whether they settled in this region after migrating from the north or the south, but there are archeological records of sedentary and organized settlements since before the arrival of the Spanish colonizers. During the colonial period, they became part of the

colonial system and were stripped of their lands, until at a later stage special Indigenous reservations were created for them, known as “resguardos”. Those Indigenous territories are legally recognized and have taken a central role in the fight of the Misak for their land and their rights (1995:273-274).



Figure 5: Location of the Misak within Cauca. The Misak are principally located within Silvia, Totoró, Jambaló and Caldono (Pueblguambiano 2016).

As for their organization, inhabitants of resguardos have their own governance entity, a council known as “Cabildo” that has administrative functions inside the resguardo and also serves as an intermediary with the Colombian authorities (Calle Restrepo 1995). In terms of political action, the Misak have been active in various Colombian Indigenous movements and have rallied around land restitution as the axis of their pleas (1995:273-281). In fact, in 1980 they developed a manifesto claiming all sorts of rights, from rights to their lands to rights to their culture and their freedom (1995:222-226). As a recent example, the Misak toppled statues of Spanish Conquistadores as part of a series of protests in Colombia in 2021 (Torrado 2021). The toppling of the statues was framed as historical justice and as an act of dignity, considering the statues were monuments to the oppressive conquest of Indigenous peoples by the Spaniards (2021). They are also part of the regional Indigenous council of Cauca (CRIC n.d.) and the movement is centered around land restitution, strengthening of their own entities and

institutions, defense of their culture, language and ways of life and, importantly, the widespread circulation of laws about Indigenous peoples to demand their rightful implementation.

In terms of language, a sociolinguistic study of Namtrik was published in June 2022 on the website of the Ministry of Culture (Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia n.d.a). The study is part of a project about the vitality of Indigenous languages in Colombia and seeks to strengthen Indigenous languages in the country, with the caveat that the study is exploratory in nature and does not seek to propose models of intervention (Bodnar Contreras n.d.). Namtrik was chosen as a language of study due to its relatively high number of speakers and its highly organized communities, but also thanks to its presence in the education sector (n.d.:17-20).

According to the data presented by the study, the Misak represent the third biggest Indigenous population in the Cauca department with a total of 19.473 people, comprised of 4.279 families (Bodnar Contreras n.d.:25). Namtrik however represents the second biggest Indigenous language in the Cauca region, although there is no reliable information about the exact number of its speakers. Also uncertain are its linguistic ties to other languages, as Namtrik is now considered to be part of the Barbacoa language family, but it has also been considered to be isolated in the past (n.d.:34).

To assess the vitality of Namtrik, a survey was carried out in multiple *resguardos* with the participation of 288 people (Bodnar Contreras n.d.:34-35). The questions were comprised of a wide array of topics and its main concerns appear to be language use and language proficiency. The survey was available in Namtrik and Spanish and it asked about language use in specific private and public spaces, while also touching upon the subject of general perception of language use and language transmission in the wider community (n.d.:89-107). A quick summary of the results shows that most participants are competent speakers of Namtrik but the proficiency is skewed towards the older generations, with the number of passive speakers increasing among the younger ones. Participants also expressed a general sentiment of language loss in the younger generations, which is also mirrored by the fact that according to the survey, older generations are more concerned about the preservation of Namtrik. In general, though, most participants are keen to maintain their language and most of them learnt it with their families at an early age. Nonetheless, the survey shows a clear distinction between the spaces where Namtrik and Spanish are used. Whereas Spanish is the main language of the public sphere, Namtrik is mostly relegated to informal encounters and private use. There is a lopsided relevance attached to Spanish, reinforced by the importance of Spanish in schools, which leads

to a restricted use of Namtrik, even though it remains an official language according to the 1991 Constitution (n.d.:36-49).

A second part of the study consists of language revitalization proposals, observations, and personal experiences, covering the topics of society, school, communication, writing, literature, dialectal variation, and translation (Bodnar Contreras n.d.:67-218). Here, translation is framed alongside lexical development and is seen as a tool to help the language evolve, insofar as it prevents it from borrowing terms from Spanish indiscriminately (Triviño & Almendra n.d.). It is proposed that terminologies should be translated according to current needs and realities, even creating new words to account for novel scenarios and developments. Furthermore, translations should be done by interdisciplinary teams and the process should have an intergenerational nature, while abstaining from literally translating and instead focusing on a translation that carries over the Indigenous way of thinking (n.d.:211-213).

Surely, both parts of this sociolinguistic study share some of the same thematic concerns exposed in this paper and offer a more detailed account of Namtrik. Understanding the language, the Misak, and their specificities is fundamental in contextualizing the interviews properly, which will be presented next chapter. First, the method used will be briefly discussed, followed by an analysis of the interviews. In the analysis, the interviews will be contrasted to the policies discussed in this chapter, and the findings of the sociolinguistic study will also be mentioned and used as a further source of information.

4. Interviews

Throughout this thesis, the topic of policies has been explored in a theoretical manner. Its effects, however, can hardly be explored through literature. In order to analyze their implementation, the perspective of the people affected by the policies is required. For this purpose, a qualitative methodology was chosen, and semi-structured interviews were conducted, which will be the main focus of the next section of the paper. The methodological approach of the interviews will be presented, followed by a contextualization of the participants and their Indigenous community. Finally, the interviews will be explored in light of the topics discussed thus far and both the reach and the implementation of the policies will be discussed, as perceived by the people directly affected by them.

4.1. Methodology

The methodological approach used for this paper will be clarified in the following pages, alongside a broad description of the philosophical positions taken in conducting this research. The interviews can best be framed within an interpretive approach. As explained by Edwards & Holland (2013), an interpretive approach is concerned with the perspective of the participants, which is then used to understand social phenomena involving them (2013:16). Moreover, according to King et al. (2019) the focus lies on discovering how people feel and make sense of the world from their perspective, and thus allows them to share their experiences with their own words (2019:11). This perspective is closely aligned with the purpose of the interviews, which is to understand the Colombian language and translation policies from the perspective of the Indigenous community. Nonetheless, this research can also be partially framed within an emancipatory approach, considering the topic at hand.

As Edwards & Holland (2013) elaborate, this type of approach is concerned with marginalized groups, and it seeks to emphasize its members and enable their points of view, making them collaborators in the process of knowledge production. Under this approach, it is recognized that research can be used to further the interests of powerful groups of society and researchers do not have a completely neutral position, which is why control is placed in the hands of the community, to be heard under their own terms (2013:20-21). Indeed, this approach bears

similarities with some of the concerns raised in previous chapters regarding Eurocentrism, and arguably the perspective of the Indigenous community takes a central role in the analysis of the implementation of the policies, and it is framed under their own terms. Consequently, a combination of both interpretive and emancipatory approaches seems to better reflect the content matter of this paper, focusing simultaneously on personal experiences and perspectives, and also on power structures and disempowered voices.

The interviews themselves were designed along those lines and the method used was semi-structured interviews, where the researcher has a guideline of topics that should be covered, but there is flexibility for answering and posing the questions (Edwards & Holland 2013). This type of interview allows participants to answer on their own terms and lets them convey their answers in a way deemed appropriate by them, while also retaining some structure for the researcher and allowing for comparisons between different interviewees (2013:29).

In regard to the participants, they are part of the Misak community in Colombia and were contacted and recruited through mutual acquaintances. Even though many more people were contacted, only two of them responded and participated in the interviews. Undoubtedly, the physical distance between Vienna and Colombia complicated the process of recruiting since it relied on mutual contacts and online communication, excluding members of the community without internet access or without direct contact to my non-Indigenous acquaintances. Further studies on this matter could certainly benefit from a larger sample and improve upon the recruiting process, perhaps working in the field and contacting participants in face-to-face interactions. And yet, under the time and resource constraints of this master's thesis, the perspectives and experiences of the two interviewees suffice in providing a contrasting point to the policies described and explored in the previous chapter.

Having mentioned physical distance and its difficulties, it goes without saying that the interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom. On this matter, King et al. (2019) write that there are some specific challenges relative to conducting interviews remotely, such as access to suitable devices or technological issues (2019 :120-122). Fortunately, after the COVID-19 pandemic, access to suitable devices and technologies is more widespread and the interviews could be conducted remotely without difficulties.

In terms of language, the interviews were conducted in Spanish and that is in itself an interesting point to reflect upon, considering the topics mentioned thus far. For instance, it is worth considering if an interview in their native language would yield different results, perhaps

not in terms of content but in terms of meaning. By conducting the interviews in Spanish, their answers are limited to the ways of expression of Spanish and not their own mother tongue, letting them answer under their own terms but not in their own language. Considering the approaches discussed further above, it would seem like an interview conducted in their native language would be a preferable approach, and maybe further research would be conducted that way. For now, though, the central role of Spanish in the interviews represents another aspect of the ubiquitous nature of language and represents yet another opportunity to reflect upon language use.

Finally, a clarification of the methodology implemented would not be complete without describing the methods used for the transcription and the analysis of the interviews. For the transcription, an orthographic style was used, as highlighted and explained by Braun & Clarke (2013). The main goal of this style of transcripts is to thoroughly record what was said rather than how it was said and is thus sufficient in analyzing the interviews at hand (2013:161-170). As for the analysis, it followed the guidelines proposed by Braun & Clarke for a thematic analysis. As described by them, this method is highly flexible and seeks to identify themes present in the data, consisting of three main stages, namely data coding, pattern identification, and interpreting of patterns (2013:174-271).

The interviews were coded following the complete coding approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2013). The codes used were researcher-derived and were developed according to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks exposed throughout this paper (2013:206-216). The codes can be broadly organized into five distinct topics, which are education, identity, policies, translation and interpreting, and language use. Each of those topics were further subcategorized. For example, within the topic of education the code “complexity of interculturality and academia” is to be found alongside the code “importance of Indigenous teachers to avoid assimilation”.

The next stage of the analysis, pattern identification, was based on the codes developed in the previous stage. As patterns were already identified during the process of coding, those patterns were combined, and three main themes emerged. First, that interculturality and multilingualism have a ubiquitous nature; second, that policies succeed insofar as there is a degree of active involvement; and third, that language plays a fundamental role in protecting cultural identity.

Following the stage of pattern identification, the last stage as described by Braun & Clarke (2013) took place and the patterns were interpreted and analyzed. Extracts were selected to illustrate the identified themes and the data was analyzed, for the most part, in what Braun & Clarke describe as an analytical or interpretative manner. These type of analysis focuses on the content and implicit meaning of the selected statements and seeks to interpret the extracts by utilizing the conceptual and theoretical knowledge of the researcher (Braun & Clarke 2013:249-258). With this approach, the literature discussed in previous chapters was integrated into the analysis, and parallels with the sociolinguistic study of Namtrik were raised.

Indeed, similar questions regarding language use were asked as part of the study and during the interviews, and there is some coincidental overlap, since the interviews took place two months before the release date of the study, as found on the website. As such, the study offers a complementary data point and helps illustrate the dynamics surrounding Namtrik and the Misak, although without extensively focusing on translation and interpreting. Considering the above, the next section of this chapter will then delve into the analysis of the interviews, now that the contextual framework needed has been established.

4.2. Findings

As was noted previously, two remote interviews were conducted in April 2022, with a duration of 42 minutes and 27 minutes, respectively. Full transcripts in Spanish are available as Appendices A and B, although for the analysis the content will be paraphrased in English, with mention of the corresponding line when needed. All the names mentioned during the interviews were shortened to initials, including those of the participants, and they will be referred to as J. for the first interviewee (Appendix A) and D. for the second one (Appendix B). To begin then, a brief presentation of both J. and D. is in order to better contextualize their perspectives, according to the background information provided during the interview.

The first participant, J., is a Misak man who works as a teacher in a Misak educational institution. Besides his work as a teacher, he studies public administration and is also involved in research on Indigenous languages (Appendix A:15-21). The second participant, D., is a Misak woman with studies in social communication and journalism as well as a master's degree in political communication. She works as an adviser on Indigenous communication for two different organizations and is also the general coordinator of the official communication

program of her Cabildo, mostly consisting of radio stations for the community in their own language. It is also interesting to mention that D. has experience with interpreting and translating for her people, although she does not have any training in the field (Appendix B:15-17; 169-183; 193-209). Evidently, both participants are actively involved in issues related to Indigenous languages, yet this is entirely coincidental, as they were not asked to participate based on those grounds nor did I know the degree to which they were involved beforehand. Perhaps they agreed to participate precisely because of that background, but in any case it is relevant to say that their background reflects an interest in their language and a degree of knowledge about the topics at hand.

In terms of their linguistic background, J. and D. refer to their language using two different names, Namui wam and Namtrik, respectively. Since the name Namtrik is the one that has been used thus far, it will be used for the remainder of this paper, but both names are to be found in the Appendices. Both participants stated that their families communicated exclusively in their mother tongue, and Spanish was learned at a later stage in school. In J.'s case, Namtrik was the only language of communication of his early childhood until his father sent him to school to learn Spanish, at the very least to learn how to sign documents. He also worked as a merchant with his uncles and that contributed to gradually improving his Spanish, although Namtrik remains the most spoken language inside the territory and Spanish is used only in other contexts outside of it (Appendix A:180-209). As for D., she also learned Spanish in school and also says that within the territory, she communicates in her own language and only outside of it is it really needed to speak Spanish (Appendix B:42-48).

Both instances point to an instrumental need to learn Spanish, reminiscent of the topic of instrumental language rights discussed before. In that sense, Spanish is acquired as the means to communicate outside of the territory, and it is merely used to have access to other spaces. Interestingly, D. even refers to it as a borrowed language and mentions that Spanish is a tool to try to understand that other group that does not understand them. Also worth mentioning is that she feels more at ease when communicating with other Indigenous peoples, even if the common language is Spanish, given that she has a better grasp of Indigenous dynamics and situations (Appendix B:35-37; 46-48; 61-66). As such, it points to one common thread of the interviews, which is interculturality and the complex dynamics it entails.

The topic comes to the forefront in the academic sphere, with both participants mentioning it in relation to university, as Spanish remains the language of instruction outside of

their territories. This is especially clear in the case of D., who mentions that she had some difficulty understanding the academic language while studying and even now, having completed her professional studies, she sometimes has trouble understanding the dynamics of Spanish (Appendix B:54-61; 83-84). At this point it is also interesting to look into D.'s experiences translating and interpreting for the community, as it is another example of the different conceptual frameworks mentioned before and it reflects the complexities of interculturality.

As D. explains, there are some terms and concepts used in Spanish that cannot be translated into Namtrik. She describes her work as interpreting, but not only in the sense of being an interpreter, but rather in the sense of interpreting the message and decoding the meaning of the terms, to later be rearranged and explained in her language. This way of framing translation and interpreting was something she realized since the first time she was approached to do a translation, and she mentions how it is not always possible to transmit the message fully (Appendix B:80-88; 193-209; 218-223). D's work and take on interpreting is quite similar to the translation project of the Political Constitution of 1991 mentioned before. In such dissimilar cultural contexts, translation and interpreting operate more distinctly at the cultural rather than linguistic level, with the goal of transmitting the essence of a given message even if radically altering its form.

As for J., his role as a teacher shapes the way he frames interculturality, as it relates mostly to the importance of having educated Indigenous peoples as teachers. For him, Indigenous teachers are fundamental not only because they can transmit their knowledge in their own language, but also because they can convey Indigenous thought as well. Indeed, J. mentions how Indigenous teachers are supposed to strengthen the mother tongue. Until third grade, children are to be taught in Namtrik. After that, education is bilingual, with around half of the content in Spanish and the other half in Namtrik (Appendix A:56-59; 92-101; 124-125; 206-209). Education once again is seen as a significant factor in preserving a language, and it seems that at least for the Misak, the policy of "ethnoeducation" could be applied more or less satisfactorily.

According to J., thanks to the recognition given to them by the different laws already mentioned in previous chapters, they have implemented their own curricula in their territory and have designated and trained teachers as "ethnoeducators" (Appendix A:120-125; 131-136; 144-146). Another successfully implemented policy is the one of autonomy within the territory, as mentioned by D. when she notes that they have complete autonomy in their ancestral

territory and get to manage language as they see fit (Appendix B:233-234). Of course, the fact that both managed to be implemented does not immediately mean that they are successful in achieving their goals, but it is clear that the Cabildo has tried to make use of the rights granted by the Constitution and subsequent laws.

This sentiment is echoed by other instances mentioned by J. where the Cabildo has implemented policies to further the reach of Namtrik within the community, like writing signs in the language, developing their own writing system, or even providing nutritional information in their language (Appendix A:46-50; 62-65; 225-246). In terms of politics, D. says that information is available in both languages, and it is managed by their authorities, who are also in charge of managing projects like the communitarian radio coordinated by D. (Appendix B:174-177; 286-289).

All of this is not to say that there is no room for improvement. J. talks about Art 246 of the Constitution, the one granting them the right to their own jurisdiction and authorities, and explains how they were given the bases, but nothing was built on top of them. In other words, without legislation supporting it, it will not be reflected outside of its pages. J. articulates this topic with the political activism they are engaged in and explains how politicians lack the will to act on their behalf, which leaves protests as their only resource to be heard and defend their rights (Appendix A:292-299; 307-334). This sentiment exemplifies what has been said previously about policies, namely that the existence of a policy does not always equal its success nor its enforcement. In this case, there is clearly a degree of autonomy and self-governance that has been achieved but it does not seem to have reached its full potential in granting rights and protecting the Indigenous population.

D. expresses a similar thought in regard to law 1381 when she critiques the way it over-generalizes the indigenous population. For her, it fails to account for the different contexts and dynamics of the different communities and in generalizing as it did, it did not appropriately respond to their needs (Appendix B:117-132). On the other hand, J. considers the law to be helpful, with the caveat that the Misak were already working towards the same goals and the law only strengthened what was already there. He highlights that the Misak have indeed taken many steps in applying the existing laws, but also points out that there are many other indigenous communities that are unaware of them and thus do not have the appropriate tools to defend themselves (Appendix A:140; 343-355).

Both views of the law might seem contradictory at first, but it can be argued that they are both operating under the idea that the law itself is meaningless without support from the actors involved. As it happens, from D.'s perspective the law is not addressing the issues the population is concerned with and hence is unable to properly solve them, and no action can be taken to support the law. On a similar note, from J.'s perspective there has to be positive action coming from the population to actively make use of the opportunities provided by the law. In both cases, the population has to be involved one way or another and, as it happens, most of the initiatives and projects mentioned by both participants are indeed bottom-up initiatives.

Certainly, if Namtrik and the Misak have retained their cultural identities all these centuries, it is not entirely due to public policies. As J. explains, their oral tradition has been maintained and preserved by their Elders, independent of the policies of the Colombian State. Many actions have been taken throughout the years to counter threats against the community and language has been articulated as a marker of identity for them. In this regard, J. emphasizes the work the Misak have done towards strengthening their language. As he points out, there is no people without language and, accordingly, they strive to protect, preserve, and strengthen their identity through language (Appendix A:21-42; 275-277). D. agrees and frames language as one of the tools available to maintain their identities. She considers the family home as being the driving force behind linguistic choices and frames multilingualism as a desirable outcome (Appendix B:31-33; 260-269). In this regard, it seems important to raise some parallels to some previously discussed subjects. As was mentioned, the intergenerational transmission of language is often pragmatic in nature, and for many Indigenous families their language is a hindrance rather than an advantage. Combined with the lack of non-instrumental rights, it is surely an immense challenge to prevent language shift from taking place, especially faced with technological advances that constantly provide content in Spanish.

J. shows concern about this and, for instance, names television as a factor that weakens the work surrounding the mother tongue, which is one of the reasons why they are focusing on countering it with Misak teachers at school (Appendix A:248-261). As for D., she refers to her work at the radio station as a powerful tool to approach the community and be a source of information for them. She mentions how there are 12 radio stations in the Cauca department and that, though challenging, the radio is a vital tool for communicating with the audience (Appendix B:153-162). It is important to remember that those are projects stemming from the Cabildo and Indigenous peoples' initiatives. Translating and interpreting as explained by both

participants operates in a similar fashion and it is organized thanks to bilingual members of the community, without government guidance.

Going back to the translation policy sketched by law 1381, indigenous peoples have the right to an interpreter under three explicitly mentioned scenarios, namely when dealing with the health system, the public administration, or the justice system. Beginning with the health system, none of the interviewees mentioned interpreters being needed for that purpose. According to D., when members of the community leave the territory for personal reasons, they take the risk of going out even if they do not speak Spanish well (Appendix B:241-244). On the other hand, J. goes into more detail and explains that there are two types of health services available to them. On the one hand, there is a hospital that offers promotional material in Namtrik, but it is unclear if any other services are provided in the language. On the other hand, most Elders do not trust Western medicine and prefer to be treated with medicinal plants and thus receive care in their own language (Appendix A:232-246).

The other two sectors, public administration and the justice system, are characterized in a similar way by D., who explains that she usually consults with legal advisers or experts in order to first understand herself and later interpret the information and transmit it to the rest of the community. However, she also explains that when working with national or international institutions or when making political decisions outside of the territory, there are indeed translators and interpreters involved in the process (Appendix B:74-89; 239-245). Given the above, it would appear that interpreting and translating is relied upon only in official matters, perhaps to grant credibility or to avoid misunderstandings. Whatever the case, at the individual level interpreting seems to function more as ad-hoc practices, without any established interpreters' network. J's account points in a similar direction in relation to the justice system, as he describes the mechanism when an Indigenous person is prosecuted and explains that they are accompanied by a translator or by someone designated by the Cabildo. J. mentions that often, the person being prosecuted has to autonomously find a translator to help in the process, although it is not clear whether J. means a translator or an interpreter (Appendix A:162-173). It appears that J. does not distinguish between interpreting and translating, whereas D. does mention them separately, perhaps due to her experience working in the field.

These translators and interpreters have a similar profile to D. since they are mostly academically prepared and have some knowledge of the contexts and realities outside of the territory. They tend to be young and, usually, are interested in territorial politics and their

associated dynamics. Nevertheless, she explains that it is very challenging because there are only a few of them who are able to bring the community closer to the information coming from outside. D. acknowledges that the State has indeed taken some initiative in some interpreting and translation projects, like the ones found on the website of the Ministry of Culture cited above, but she also recognizes how the efforts sometimes fail to materialize for the communities (Appendix B:95-111; 248-252). This view ties neatly into her critique of law 1381 and it is worth considering if the services provided by the State represent the services sought by the people.

When directly asked about the impact of translation and interpreting, D. weighs in and argues that no blank statement will provide a satisfactory answer. She perceives it as a topic highly dependent on context and as such, it could be beneficial to some and work to the detriment of others. For D. it all depends on what its contribution would be to the community, and she does not hold the view that all information must be shared (Appendix B:139-146). D.'s perspective brings the population to the forefront once again, and from her statements it seems apparent that a generalized policy fails to properly address the needs of the people because it does not consider particular contexts. Certainly, considering what has been previously explained about policies, it is inevitable that a law remains general to a certain degree, especially one relating to such a diverse segment of Colombian society. And yet perhaps it could work more closely with the interested actors and focus on more localized projects, as can be inferred from D.'s answer.

J.'s answer to the same question was positive and he mentioned two instances where a written translation into Namtrik was done. The first one was the Political Constitution of 1991, as part of the same project described by Landaburu in Chapter 3, and the second one was the translation of the Catholic Bible. For J., that type of work is a sign of progress, and something gained by their efforts to develop their own Namtrik alphabet. In any case, he agrees with D. in stating that not all information must be shared indiscriminately, in keeping with the traditional approach of their Elders. (Appendix A:154-161; 289-292).

That common thread of keeping with their tradition echoes the idea proposed in previous pages of Indigenous peoples vying for recognition and respect. J. articulates that thought by explaining how he considers it fundamental to gain visibility, not only nationally but also on the international stage. There are Indigenous peoples, they have their own cosmovision and

thought, and they are striving to defend their rights, independently of being Misak or belonging to another community (Appendix A:366-375).

To briefly summarize, the themes overlapping with the survey cited in the previous section yielded very similar results, albeit with some exceptions. Both the interviews and the survey showed concerns regarding language loss in the younger generation, and yet they differ in the significance attributed to Spanish in schools. This is likely due to the fact that J. is a teacher himself and has firsthand knowledge of the work being done in schools. It is also likely that the institution he works at is an outlier in terms of bilingual education, and others might be less focused on Namtrik as a language of instruction. Be that as it may, there is at least some degree of interest from educational institutions to counter language loss and a detailed study focusing on Misak schools would certainly enrich the debate around bilingual education and Indigenous peoples.

In a general sense, it seems from the interviews that educational policies have managed to gain hold and achieve some level of success, as have policies pertaining to self-governance and territorial autonomy. In contrast, from the translation policy perspective there appears to be little guidance, and even if interpreting is legally recognized as a right, the translational landscape regarding Indigenous languages most closely resembles Meylaerts' third translational regime, explained in Chapter 1. Interestingly, translation policy seems to be operating on two different frequencies, mainly as an explicit and State-promoted policy, and also as bottom-up initiatives, both explicit and implicit.

The apparent disconnection between the State and the population could certainly be attributed to the sheer number of languages and communities that must be taken into consideration. Indeed, in the documents published by the Ministry of Culture that were reviewed and cited, there is mention of working closely with the Indigenous communities. Perhaps the perception of the degree of involvement is purely a matter of opinion, for surely there is no objective measure in that regard. Whatever the case, it seems clear that there can hardly be a policy that is both feasible and pleasing to the entirety of the population. There are limitations to the reach of public policies and, as has been shown, bottom-up initiatives are also able to meet the needs of the people. Yet there are still many challenges, and until policies are also accompanied by an ideological turn, many of the structural difficulties will remain in place and will further hinder attempts to move forward. That being said, the next and last chapter of this paper will

delve deeper into those topics and will open the door to current and future reflection on the topics at hand, as there is still much to be said and researched in the future.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Language comprises just one of the many aspects of human societies, and yet it pervades many other non-language-related parts of our lives. Not only does it help us articulate our thoughts and discuss our opinions and biases, but it also reflects structures and ideologies that are part of our societies. It is such an encompassing dimension of human life that it is not always easy to see the links between language and other features of society. The aim of this paper was precisely to explore the connection between language and policy and make it explicit inside of the context of the Misak people of Colombia. Far from being straightforward though, the topic is quite complex, and every chapter of this paper gave some insight into one fundamental area of discussion.

To summarize, the role of diversity is central in understanding the demographic makeup of Colombia and its policies, but also in understanding the difficulties inherent to policy making when faced with extreme diversity and dissimilar needs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, explicit mention of language and translation remains fairly general, and the different policies can be roughly summarized as granting many instrumental rights and having few provisions for non-instrumental ones. Similarly, some of the rights that are recognized lack appropriate mechanisms to ensure their application, and in a general sense there appear to be structural barriers that prevent some of the policies from manifesting as a reality.

This can be due to a wide array of reasons and any attempt to conclusively provide an answer will most likely be unsuccessful, as any answer would remain highly speculative. However, the fact that during the writing process of this thesis more material was made available could indicate that some specific actions are being taken and they could potentially materialize in the future as a mechanism to cover some of the gaps of the existing policy. As an example, an in-depth review of the 10-year plan cited earlier could shed some light in terms of policy enactment, not only in the future as a review of results, but also as a current evaluation of its goals and methods. Certainly, there is still a lot to be said and analyzed in this matter. In fact, this thesis can only offer a limited scope and it functions like a gateway into a research field that remains largely unexplored. In particular, further studies into translation do not have to focus solely on policy, but could also analyze the role of translators, the difficulties of the language pairs, the settings, or the methods, to only name a few. The possibilities seem rather

endless when compared with the little work, if any, that has been done on the matter, and as such it offers many avenues of research.

It is against that background that the interviews conducted offer a novel take on the matter and provide a perspective otherwise unattainable to an outsider. For instance, many of the apparent successes of the policies seem to be due to bottom-up initiatives, showcasing once again how explicit policies have very little impact if they are not being actively promoted. In this particular case, policies appear to be successful despite the State's lack of appropriate action and from the information available, the Misak appear to be well informed and are actively trying to make use of the rights accorded to them, with different degrees of success.

And yet that is not to say that there is no evidence of any kind of action from the State, but rather that it is limited in scope. Certainly, practical limitations have an immense influence in the outcome of any given policy and are to be taken into consideration while evaluating them, although the extent and the validity of those limitations is up for debate. Also worth mentioning is the fact that some structural issues of discrimination cannot be addressed by policies alone, seeing that they rely on the support of the rest of society to be effective and will hardly take root and produce tangible changes unless they also target the ideological issues behind it.

There is also the matter of intention and resolve, which are fundamental in enacting and implementing policies. It appears that there is not much political will to make sure the policies are either improved or implemented, and that too can be the object of further studies. As it happens, during the process of writing this master's thesis a new president was elected in Colombia, and he has already chosen Indigenous peoples for positions that might give them the voice and power denied to them thus far (Castrillón Palacio 2022). This is an unprecedented situation in the country and perhaps it will materialize in other areas of the State as well, opening the gate to even more potential areas of research.

Indeed, the topic is rife with potential, considering that not much has been published on the subject of language and translation policy in Colombia, much less in connection with Indigenous languages. On a global scale, the topic has been researched mostly in relation to the Indigenous communities in countries like Australia, the United States or Canada. In South America, the topic has been explored in some of the works cited in this paper, like de Pedro Ricoy et al. (2018) and Howard et al. (2018), who write about translation policy in Peru, or Korak (2021), who writes about translation and the Waorani of Ecuador. However, besides the

project to translate the Political Constitution explained by Landaburu (1997), translation policy has not played a significant role in research about Colombia.

In that sense, this paper is but an initial step toward a more comprehensive exploration of translation and interpreting in Colombia. Clearly, I approached the topic from a rather sociological perspective instead of a technical one, precisely because I consider that the field can be greatly enriched by interdisciplinarity. Translation and interpreting in everyday life does not take place in a vacuum and, hence, can be influenced by factors seemingly external to the field. In this particular case, given all the circumstances of Indigenous peoples presented thus far, it would be disingenuous to pretend that translation and interpreting take place in a neutral space and that there are no sociological and ideological aspects to consider. Those aspects certainly took a central stage and were brought to the foreground, to avoid replicating harmful biases and preconceived notions as much as possible.

As such, acknowledging my own shortcomings and potential biases seems to be the fairest way of exploring the topic. Indeed, I opted for a reflective approach as I consider my subjectivity to be an integral part of my writing process, and my background shapes the way I relate to, and interpret, the topics at hand. More than likely, a different writer would choose to emphasize or give weight to different aspects, as clearly my perspective as a Spanish speaking Colombian will greatly differ from that of an Austrian or a Misak. But since I cannot change my Eurocentric background, the least I can do is to highlight the problems inherent to Eurocentrism and explore the implicit discourse around Indigenous peoples. Certainly, it would be preferable to explore the topic from an Indigenous perspective, or perhaps even in a non-Eurocentric context, but as an initial step this thesis suffices in giving visibility to many issues that could just as easily be ignored.

Nonetheless, this paper is not without limitations and many more pages could be written about most topics. Indeed, the scope of the paper is constrained by limited time and resources, and there is still room for a more thorough and detailed exploration of the main concerns of this thesis. Another important point to be considered is that this paper is limited to only one Indigenous community, i.e., one language out of 65. The perspective of the Misak cannot be discounted and will play a role in the overall assessment of policies, but it is not definite and cannot be entirely extended and generalized to the other Indigenous communities in Colombia. In that sense, more research should be conducted in other Indigenous communities, to have a clearer picture of language and translation policy in the whole Colombian territory.

Additionally, to have a more representative and comprehensive sample of the Misak and their perspective, more interviews should be conducted within the community. As it is, the sample is rather limited and the views presented here do not necessarily represent the majority views within the Misak, with the caveat that the interviewees were knowledgeable on the matter and provided an informed perspective. Perhaps without geographical limitations it would be easier to find willing participants, which would enhance the scope of the interviews and add more nuance to the analysis.

Lastly, it appears that an unforeseen limitation of this thesis relates to the time when it was written. As has been mentioned previously, not only has the Ministry of Culture released several documents pertaining to Indigenous languages, but the new government has also pledged to bring the Indigenous population closer to the spotlight. That being the case, any short-term changes to the policies in the country are not considered in this paper, which might prove a limitation if indeed any changes do occur. Policies do not remain static and change along with society, reflecting in one way or another some of the inner dynamics that constitute it. A study such as this one will therefore be but a reflection of the situation at a specific point in time, a window looking into a complex network of interconnected threads that is embedded in a time and place of its own.

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Appendix A

- 1 Int: Listo
- 2 J: Sí, no hay problema
- 3 Int: Eh bueno, entonces ehm, espérate lo hago también con mi celular por si acaso llega a
4 pasar que no funciona la grabación. Bueno, entonces eh, como te había dicho por
5 WhatsApp, esta entrevista es para mi tesis de grado. Yo soy estudiante de la universidad
6 de Viena en Austria y estoy acabando una maestría en interpretación y traducción, y mi
7 tema es sobre la política de lenguaje eh, que hay en Colombia, y sobre la interpretación
8 y traducción de lenguas indígenas. Entonces la gracia de esta entrevista es escuchar tu
9 experiencia, que me cuentes sobre tu lengua materna, sobre cómo, como funciona
10 realmente en Colombia, porque yo, que no pertenezco a ninguna comunidad, pues la
11 verdad no, no lo sé, no la conozco, y me interesa desde tu perspectiva saber cómo lo
12 ves. Eh, la entrevista se está grabando y es una entrevista totalmente voluntaria, de la
13 que te puedes retirar en cualquier momento, entonces eh, si estás de acuerdo podemos
14 comenzar
- 15 J: Bueno, pues me presento, ¿no? Mi nombre es J.S.C.T. En este momento soy docente
16 de la Institución Educativa Misak Mama Manuela. Eh, pues mis estudios he realizado
17 más enfocado en la parte de administrativa y lo otro pues estoy candidato a mágister,
18 también estoy con las lenguas indígenas. Eh, pues eh, para mí también me, me sirve
19 porque estoy en ese proceso de investigación. Y lo otro pues estoy en cuarto semestre
20 de administración pública, que también pues eh, eso es complejo para nosotros en esa
21 interculturalidad que nosotros eh, pues estamos. Eh, bueno, de todas maneras eh, el
22 proceso de, de, de las eh, lenguas indígenas, el Namui wam, Namui wam se, se
23 caracteriza, o sea, la lengua materna propia, lengua uno, eh, que llamamos, eh, pues nos
24 habemos conservado gracias a nuestros Mayores, eh, y siampre, siempre han venido
25 transmitiendo esa oralidad, eh, hasta el momento y es, es esa oralidad pues nos sigue
26 perviviendo eh, hasta el momento. Poco a poco se ha venido debilitando entonces en la
27 década del ochenta y cinco, eh, hicieron el primer comité a través del Cabildo de
28 Guambía, la autoridad máxima y se reunió un comité de historia. Con qué finalidad.
29 Par-, porque a nosotros eh, nos, el estado colombiano con la constitución de mil
30 novecientos ochenta y seis, eh, nos desconocía como seres humanos. Entonces, pero eh,
31 gracias a la constitución del noventa y uno, ya en ese entonces en otros eh, ya estamos
32 reconocidos, pero hicimos un proceso eh, pues desde el ochenta y cinco con el comité
33 de historia, donde ellos empezaron a investigar la parte arqueológica y entonces
34 encontraron una, el carbono catorce, acá en nuestra comunidad, y de ahí pues ya somos,
35 con esa investigación, con ese soporte, pues nosotros ya eh, la noven-, la constitución
36 del noventa y uno fue más el reconocimiento de la, de la ciudadanía como tal y del
37 Estado. Pero eh, más sin embargo pues eh, nuevamente eh, de ahí eh, del comité
38 lingüístico nació, nació otro que es el comité, ve, el comité de historia, después del
39 comité de historia nació el comité lingüístico. Con qué finalidad, ya que pues éramos
40 originario de estos tierras, nos toca que fortalecer la parte de la identidad. Y una de las
41 iden-, identidades pues es el Namui wam. Esta el nuestro vestido, nuestro atuendo. Y
42 son semillas propias, está en todo, está, para nosotros es, ya es articularlo, está
43 articulado, es integral. Por esa razón, ya empezaron a, a unificar la parte de, de, de la
44 literatura digamos en nosotros, porque ya en ese entonces la profe Mama B.M. y Taita

45 J. eh, profesor J. eh, J.H., Taita J.H., eh, pues vinie-, trajeron una lingüística y una
46 investigación, una ya digamos nosotros llamamos al segundo momento, la, pues y
47 empezaron a, a sacar alfabetos eh, propios, y entonces y en, allá en el noventa y cuatro
48 se unificó a través de la asamblea, entonces de ahí quedó como Namui wam eh, y, y se
49 unificó la, la parte literatura. De ahí con eso nosotros pues, en este momento ya
50 contamos con, con prestado, ¿no?, alfabeto prestado de, de todas maneras, no es propio,
51 es prestado, sí, pero ya

52 Int: Sí, pero lo tienen

53 J: Sí, pero ya con ese proceso hemos avanzado, en este momento hay textos, hay libros,
54 desde lo pedagógico, ¿no? Porque hay muchos eh, docentes eh, en su formación hicie-
55 , hicieron monografías, investigaciones y acuerdo eso pues seguimos nuestro, hilando
56 nuestro, nuestro pensamiento. Y con eso pues vamos enfocando a, a la básica primaria.
57 Entonces eh, ya el sector escolarizado eh, desde preescolar hasta, digamos desde primera
58 infancia, preescolar hasta básica primaria, hasta tercero, tiene que ser un, por obligación,
59 un docente Namui wam, o sea tiene que ser, de esos tres grados, tiene que, es una
60 política, ¿no? Eh, de esos tre-, tre-, hasta tercer grado tiene que ser docente Misak. Y a
61 cuarto y quinto pues está el docente ya mestizo. Qué quiere decir, que quiere pues
62 fortalecer también la, la parte de la lengua dos eh, entonces eh, ahí se, se, hay una
63 política, se, establecidas en las instituciones. Y también en este momento pues todos
64 los programas del Cabildo de Guambía como tal, como primera infancia o parte
65 educativa, que hace parte de educativa, pues tiene que ser en, eh, eh, están orientadas a,
66 a, a sacar a los letrados en Namui wam. O sea, todo lo que es avisos, y eso es en Namui
67 wam. Lo mismo acá la institución eh, estamos en ese proceso. Pero ya mucho, no hace
68 mucho, hace como dos o tre-, cuatro, cinco años que pues, estamos ya investigando y
69 con unos maestros eh, pues ya eh, digamos maestros y estudiantes comprometidos,
70 están sacando la leng-, lenguaje natural. Que qué quiere decir, que eso pues eh, antes
71 nuestros Mayores eh, eh, cuando no habían escolarizado, lo ellos eh, empezaron a
72 (revolver) la literatura y la escritura en las piedras, en los diferentes sitios sagrados.
73 Entonces hay muchos eh, maestros que empezaron a investigar eso. Entonces ya se, se
74 reconoce como el nombre de lenguaje natural. En este momento está en discusión el
75 nombre, ¿no?, lenguaje natural, pero ya ha avanzado. Por ahora pues tenemos eso, eh
76 pues toca que hacer una asamblea, no sé, y pero están (fundiendo) entonces, eso se,
77 digamos eh, eh, los sitios sagrados donde está esa escritura plasmada en las piedras eh,
78 ya es para nosotros, es una, el alfabeto propio. Eh, y estamos en eso y están en ese
79 proceso. Eh, eh, hay unas políticas en, reglamentadas por las autoridades y por las
80 instituciones, que en este momento estamos en, en mejoramiento. Por esa razón, eh, eh,
81 pues desde la institucionalidad, o sea las universidades, las facultades, eh, hicieron un
82 pronunciamiento, o sea la autoridad se pronunció, mandó un oficio solicitando que
83 desde la academia también ((inaudible)) es un derecho, que tengamos yo y, tengamos
84 nuestro proceso. Y entonces por eso fue que nosotros solicitamos una capacitación a
85 los maestros. Pero desde la institucionalidad sacaron la maestría, entonces, eh, eso, en
86 eso estamos, pues nosotros eh, a través de las solicitudes en vez de sacar una, un
87 diplomado o una capacitación, eh, salió la maestría. Entonces eh, pero tenemos unas
88 series de dificultades. Por qué, porque es un, si era un derecho, nosotros eh, éramos
89 fortalecer con los docentes eh, que saben, que sepan interpretar y hablar el Namui wam,
90 pero siempre vienen, si es una maestría, tenemos el, el pro, o sea lo parte negativa y la
91 parte positiva. Por qué, porque vienen un docentes de, mestizos, y entonces vienen a
92 enseñar a la maestría entonces es complejo. Pero la idea en este momento está en

93 discusión, a ver si, si, si (retoma) la, la maestría al fin (al Cauca) pero que sean docentes
94 eh, indígenas. O pueblos originarios, que llamamos. Uno puede ser de, de, puede ser
95 Misak, ¿no?, o puede ser Nasa, pero que sean indígenas, que, que sepan interpretar y
96 hab-, desde su contexto de digamos, territorial. Y entonces estamos en esa discusión. Y
97 lo otro pues, hay expectativas en este momento de, de, de muchos maestros, de muchos
98 estudiantes, a ese, a encontrar el origen, y estamos en eso. Eh, la idea se-, seguir
99 avanzando, eh, no quedar con esa maestría de pronto, de pronto a ver si hay un, un
100 doctorado, pero en un convenio con la, con la, con la universidad (Misak), entonces
101 estamos en ese proceso. Y lo otro, lo bueno pues es ante la norma, ante la
102 institucionalidad, al ser del Estado, pues hemos gan-, eh, como es que se llama, ley, ley
103 de lenguas, la ley. Estamos en eso.

104 Int: Ehm, bueno, pues primero, muy interesante. Yo no sabía nada de lo que me estás
105 contando pero me parece muy interesante y muy bueno que puedan tomar sus propias
106 decisiones y digamos fomentar eh, la lengua y ahí te tendría una pregunta. Tú
107 mencionaste eh, por ejemplo en los colegios, que desde la, el prescolar hasta tercero lo
108 hacen en la lengua. ¿Pero eso es una gestión que surgió de la asamblea que me dijiste
109 del ochenta y cinco del comité de historia, que luego evolucionó al comité lingüístico,
110 y de ahí surgió esta iniciativa?, ¿o de dónde, de dónde vino digamos este proceso de
111 que los profesores sean Misak y hablen la lengua?

112 J: Sí, desde el proceso de, de, del comité de historia, del comité lingüístico, ya que vieron
113 esa debilidad, o (vieron) esa debilidad, del debilitamiento de, pues según la Corte
114 Constitucional, salió una sentencia que decíamos que los pueblos originarios estaban
115 en, ya para terminar pues en pocas palabras, eso nos decían. Y entonces antes de eso
116 pues nosotros ya estábamos en ese proceso de avance, de, de, de, de, de fortalecer. Y
117 entonces, y otro hicieron un, un diplomado de, de, de, de, de docentes. Un diplomado
118 no me se me acuerdo en este, no, no me acuerdo en este momento. Pero hicieron un,
119 algo del diplomado de docentes, donde en ese entonces eh, los, nombraron como
120 docentes etnoeducadores. O sea, eh, pero en ese proceso de, el proceso es el mismo que
121 se ha venido pues gestionando, ya nombraron docentes bilin-, eh, etnoeducadores, que
122 diga. Etnoeducadores qué quiere decir, pues ya tiene que ser docentes eh, eh, nombrados
123 eh, por, por, digamos por el, por la nación, eh, propia, y entonces ellos ya, eh, pero con
124 una política de, de, diciendo que estos docentes tiene que formar a y fortalecer a, a los
125 chiquillos. O sea, lo que estoy mencionando es de básica primaria, grado cero hasta
126 tercero. Entonces ahí fue que, pues quedó en ese proceso y en asamblea, eh, que los
127 docentes tienen que ser Misak y, y formados, y para fortalecer la lengua materna, la
128 lengua uno

129 Int: Eh sí, bueno, eso ya me ha resp-, me respondiste de una vez un montón de preguntas
130 que tenía, ehm, muchas gracias por toda esa información. Eh, me parece muy
131 interesante y, pues por ejemplo ya que mencionas la, la ley de lenguas, entonces ehm,
132 no sé si la has leído entera o solamente tienes una idea general. ¿La conoces un poco
133 más detalladamente?

134 J: Sí, yo lo conozco y le he leído, y es una parte, una parte que está, es interesante que en
135 el Estado colombiano pues, donde vivimos, es complejo pero nos reconocieron como
136 la lengua, entonces por eso eh, así como las lenguas eh, oficiales o lenguas extranjeras
137 están implementadas en el currículo, así mismo pues hay eh, decide que tiene que ser

138 implementado los pueblos originarios. Entonces eso me parece interesante, eh, pues y,
139 y en eso estamos

140 Int: Eh, sí, y entonces digamos, con lo que tú me cuentas, ehm, digamos que la ley sí los ha
141 entonces apoyado o les ha servido para poder fortalecer los procesos que ya llevaban
142 trayendo desde la, desde el comité del ochenta y cinco

143 J: Ajá, sí. Sí, o fortaleció más. Nosotros ya sabíamos pero con esa ley pues nos fortaleció
144 más y entonces en el momento pues estamos ya, eh, con eso empezaron a articular a
145 los, eh, a los estudiantes de las, eh, básica secundaria. Entonces ellos también ya en este
146 momento, pues ahí, así como la lengua extranjera, una hora del, de, de inglés y para
147 cada, para dos horas del, del Namui wam. Y las áreas fundamentales que, que tenemos.
148 O sea, hay áreas propias y áreas fundamentales en el, en el pues digamos currículo
149 propio que estamos implementando acá en nuestro territorio

150 Int: Mhm, ehm, bueno, entonces ya que estamos hablando de la ley de lenguas, ehm, hay
151 un apartado, un artículo, que habla sobre la capacitación de intérpretes, que deberían
152 estar disponibles por ejemplo para temas judiciales, o en el sector de la salud, o bueno,
153 en diferentes sectores para poder garantizar el cumplimiento de varios derechos
154 fundamentales. Entonces yo te quería preguntar, ¿tú qué opinas al respecto de, de esa
155 parte? ¿Tú qué, qué cons-, o sea, consideras que la traducción y la interpretación juegan
156 un papel en la protección y la, como el cuidado de la lengua?

157 J: Sí, claro, porque inclusive la constitución no tenemos, nosotros tenemos la una, una
158 compañera maestra, lo tiene ya traducido de la constitución del noventa y uno. O sea,
159 eso fue una ganancia. Inclusive hay mucha curiosidad, también pues acá no-, nosotros
160 compartimos la parte de, de credos y entonces la biblia también la han, algunos, y está
161 traducida la biblia católica, pero está en discusión porque eso lo hicieron antes de, de,
162 de, de consolidar la, la, la, digamos la, alfabeto. Entonces, pero sigue en discusión. Pero
163 sí han hecho y eso para nosotros pues es, es unos avances que tenemos, teníamos, que
164 tenemos todavía y, y, y estamos en eso. Y ya, y por, y por otro lado pues en este
165 momento ya inclusive pues eh, eh, cuando vamos a diferentes digamos, eh, cuando las
166 personas son judicializadas, eh, siempre aquí llevan un traductor o un acompañante
167 para, para mirar esos procesos. Y siempre hemos ganado y es una, es una fortaleza para
168 nosotros

169 Int: Ehm, ahora que mencionas que siempre tienen un acompañante o un traductor, ¿esta
170 persona es una persona que digamos el Estado la ubica, o ustedes mismos gestionan
171 todo esto del acompañante?

172 J: No, ellos, la persona que está implicada pues ella busca o toma autónomamente, o con
173 la autoridad, pues siempre está, la persona está, es funcionario de, de, de la, de, pues
174 del Cabildo de Guambía, o sea desde las autoridades. Entonces uno, digamos si está en
175 centro de justicia pues, eh, la persona o la coordinadora o, o el, el jurídico de, de la, de
176 la institución pues se acompaña en esos procesos

177 Int: Mhm, bueno, entiendo. Muchísimas gracias. Eh, ahora, bueno, ya, ya hablamos un poco
178 entonces como de este aspecto legal, pero me interesaría saber también un poco sobre
179 un aspecto digamos más personal, y que me contaras un poco sobre cómo, en qué
180 momento aprendiste tú español, o desde cuándo lo hablas, que me cuentes un poco sobre

181 eso. Y también que me cuentes en qué espacios tú hablas tu lengua materna y en cuáles
182 espacios hablas en cambio español

183 J: Bueno, mi, mi, mi proceso de, de, de, de niñez, pues eh, la lengua materna lo practicaban
184 mis abuelos, a través de la oralidad. Mis abuelos y mis papás, pues cien por ciento es la
185 lengua uno. Eh, y hasta, creo que hasta, yo me acuerdo que no sé cuanto tenía, por ahí
186 seis o siete años, yo permanecía en la casa. Y un momento pues ya mi papá dijo 'pues
187 ya al menos que, que sepas escribir o (defender), o al menos sepas firmar, pues vaya a
188 la escuela'. Entonces poco a poco pues fui a la escuela y de día en la escuela con los
189 compañeros y con los docentes pues ya uno trataba de entender, ¿no? Y ya poco a poco
190 desde, casi de los ocho años ya, ya entendía la, la, la lengua dos. Entonces ese es el
191 proceso. Y lo otro pues ya desde muy chico por la misma (necesidad) de, de, de, en la
192 familia, en la casa, eh, uno, pues necesitaba vestir, necesitaba comer y entonces yo me,
193 mi, mis tíos eran comerciantes, o sea, eran intermediarios, compraban cebolla y vendía
194 a un, iban a un pueblo y vendían. Entonces yo me le pegué con ellos y entonces desde
195 muy chico empecé como a, a esa, a esa comercialización. Ahí porque me obligaban,
196 obligado, obligado tocaba que aprender y conocer las cuatro operaciones que son las
197 matemáticas, pues y sumar y restar. Y ahí fue que se volvió más mecánico para mí, pero
198 pues de todas maneras así mismo pues eh, mis tíos, hablando con mis tíos pues hablaban
199 siempre, estén donde estén, hablaban Namui wam. Porque es la lengua uno. Y no se me
200 dificultaba. Y lo mismo ya el español también ya es dominado porque esta-, éramos
201 comerciantes entonces poco a poco. Ya eh, eh, donde estoy, pues si yo estoy con mis
202 amigos, o sea, digamos con mi familia, pues es la lengua uno. Pero dependiendo mi
203 espacio, si voy para, de pronto para Popayán, o si estoy en Bogotá o en otro lado, pues
204 ya, ya si estoy con otra gente pues ya toca eh, aprender la lengua dos. Ah o a veces yo
205 no escucho la lengua tres pero eh, escuchar escucho pero no puedo pronunciar. O sea
206 en el inglés. Y por eso pues, y eso pues me lo llevó a ir a conocer a nivel de, así de
207 Europa. Estuvimos en Europa y, y estamos ahí. Y, y acá en el colegio pues es cien por
208 ciento que estoy con los compañeros, eh, pues es en Namui wam, pues también con los
209 estudiantes eh, es poco español, más es en, en nuestra lengua. Por qué, porque la idea
210 es como, que estamos en ese proceso de formación y la idea es que no se debilite el
211 Namui wam, pues para que tratar de transmitir una parte, casi el cincuenta por ciento
212 en español y cincuenta por ciento en Namui wam

213 Int: Mhm, okay, entiendo. Eh, solo porque creo que no te lo había contado, este, la tesis la
214 voy a escribir en inglés entonces igual cualquier cosa, duda que tengas, cuando esté lista
215 te la haré llegar y con mucho gusto te puedo, te puedo ayudar, ehm. Y ya volviendo,
216 volviendo al tema, eh, okay, muy interesante lo que me cuentas y ahora te tendría de
217 pronto un par de preguntas puntuales. Como que me expliques en, en estos contextos a
218 cuál lengua recurrirías, ehm, por ejemplo en temas de salud, cómo, cómo con qué
219 lengua te moverías. O, digamos, porque lo que me, lo que me contabas pues es como
220 en, en, en contextos como con tu familia, con tus amigos, mucho más personales, en el,
221 en la institución educativa y todo eh, te puedes expresar en tu lengua materna, pero
222 mencionaste Popayán, o Bogotá, y en esos casos entonces, ahí, cómo, cómo lo manejas.
223 Te, te pasas al español

224 J: No, depende de si es capacitaciones, si es formación. Eso como lo transmiten en español
225 entonces uno ya depende normal de, no hay ningún inconveniente. De pronto, no no no,
226 no hay dificultad por, por la lengua uno, no. Ve, lengua dos. Y ya para el, y ya con, y
227 acá cuando llegamos a la comunidad sí ya es diferente. Pero usted me preguntaste de,

228 del centro de, de, de salud. En este momento también, pues como la, es una política de
229 la institucionalidad, o sea el Cabildo de Guambía, de la autoridad, ellos también ya,
230 plan nutricional, ya está en Namui wam. O sea, y todo estamos enfocado ya y en este
231 momento pues es que lo que pasa es que en el celular, el otro celular que me lo robaron,
232 tenía toda la, ya todo, eh, lo, me enviaron todo el proceso. Y eso era importante pero yo
233 trato de conseguir y le te envío

234 Int: Ay, bueno, te lo agradezco mucho

235 J: Sí, en Namui wam hay una muy buena parte. Sí, en la parte nutricional, la, la, la, lo que
236 es prevención y, promoción y prevención, los diez P y P, ya está, o sea, allá también,
237 eh, pues en todos los programas eh, como eh, la política es fortalecer el Namui wam,
238 entonces está listo. Y inclusive las eh, tenemos un, digamos, tenemos dos cosas, ¿no?,
239 aquí tenemos el hospital occidental, que está un poco más atrás de, del colegio, (Mama
240 Dominga), y el otro es eh, las plantas medicinales. Ya es con plantas propias, ahí
241 también aplica, están aplicando, ahí sí aplican el Namui namui. Por qué, porque Namui
242 wam. Porque los Mayores van más, eh, se, dependen o ir allá con las plantas
243 medicinales, porque son digamos muy, no son eh, digamos no creen mejor dicho en la
244 medicina occidental. Entonces van allá y ellos pues ahí hablan en Namui wam también
245 ahí. Eh y ya ((inaudible)) médicos tradicionales, parteras, y entonces van en el contexto
246 de allá. Entonces más van allá, los Mayores. Los jóvenes pues si hasta un dolor de una
247 muela van al hospital pero ya, ya los Mayores ya saben a dónde ir. Pero allá, pero en el
248 hospital también pues todo lo que es P y P, lo que es promoción y prevención, y lo que
249 es nutrición, pues ya tienen eh, Namui wam.

250 Int: La información

251 J: Sí. Y tenemos unas debilidades internas, sí tenemos, bastantes. Por qué, porque la
252 tecnología es un, pa los que saben aprovechar, los que sabemos aprovechar, es
253 fundamental. Pero pa los que no, pues nos debilitan estos procesos como el de la lengua
254 materna, que es la lengua uno, y es complejo. Por qué, porque en este momento, pues
255 si usted antes eh, nosotros no, solamente teníamos una radio, y entre ese radio pues
256 estaba toda la familia al (estéreo) escuchando, y más anterior eran los concejos de los
257 principios y valores de nuestros Mayores. Desafortunadamente estos medios pues, que
258 han venido eh, involucrando y debilitando. Y más aún en este momento la televisión,
259 porque los niños, hay unos programas especiales y esos programas pues vienen a un
260 niño y se sienta un momento y aprende muy rápido la lengua dos. Y entonces en este
261 momento la mayoría de los niños pues, llegan hablando la lengua dos, o sea ya han
262 fortalecido la lengua dos más ((inaudible)) la lengua uno. Y entonces por eso fue que
263 también eh, la política era que primero tienen que ser los docentes Misak y después se-
264 , seguir con los grupos mestizos. Y ese es el proceso que estamos eh, arrancando en este
265 momento

266 Int: Mhm, claro, claro. O sea, los medios de comunicación que llegan, igual son en su
267 mayoría en español

268 J: Ajá, sí señora, señorita

269 Int: Listo, entiendo. No, señora. Pero, ehm, bueno, entonces ehm, ahora siguiendo un poco
270 por este, por este camino de los espacios en los que se habla una o se habla otra, eh,

271 ¿cómo se ve esto en cuanto a participación política? O sea, eh, claro, el Cabildo es el
272 que está teniendo esta política y promoviendo todo esto pero a un nivel un poco más
273 global, eh, ¿cómo se ve esto?, o ¿cómo crees tú que, que se, que se refleja esto en la
274 participación política de ustedes?

275 J: Pues en este momento, lo que es eh, usted es más conocedora que nosotros en este
276 momento en el nivel del país, pues habemos ciento seis pueblos. De los ciento seis
277 pueblos pues algunos están en, ya en extinción, eh, nosotros en este momento si
278 seguimos fortaleciendo eh, con la lengua materna, y hemos enfocado más en, en ese
279 proceso. Por qué, porque eh, según un pensador, un escritor decía 'sin la lengua no es
280 un pueblo'. O sea, sin la lengua no, no hay un pueblo. Y obviamente para ser pueblo
281 tenemos que conservar la lengua, proteger y, y fortalecer la lengua. Segundo, eso sería
282 lo segundo, las semillas. La, las, la soberanía y autonomía alimentaria. Y entonces esas
283 semillas pues se, si son propias tienen el, el nombre de Namui wam. Pero si son ajenas
284 eh, tienen el nombre de, ya de, de, digamos occidental. Entonces ya los muchachos y
285 la, la comunidad lo caracteriza por ese lado. Ya propias, pues ya propias son otras, ya
286 son más, digamos, ya se pueden ser transgénicas, ¿no? Entonces eso es eh, el contexto.
287 Y entonces eh, nosotros pues, a nivel institucional eh, siempre prendemos, si hablamos,
288 si hacemos un convenio interadministrativo, que puede ser con el Ministerio o puede
289 ser con una embajada o con un, una ONG, también involucramos nuestro proceso de,
290 de, de, de, de, de nosotros, o sea, la parte de la economía eh, que la economía pues está
291 todo lo que es, lo que estamos hablando. La lengua, el vestido, las semillas, y los ciclos
292 lunares. Para nosotros es importante. Y la cosmovisión. Entonces que siempre nos
293 respeten la cosmovisión y el origen de, de, de, de nuestro pueblo. Y entonces eso es la
294 política que manejamos y, y que la información, lo otro es que la información no vaya
295 al cien por ciento. Que no que, sea más eh, más reservado, que nos enseñaron nuestros
296 Mayores, y ese es el proceso que hacemos con la institucionalidad. Y pues las políticas,
297 pues todavía lastimosamente nosotros en la constitución del noventa y uno quedamos
298 con eh, artículo dos cuarenta y seis, donde está el tronco pero no están las ramas.
299 Entonces la idea es pues a ver como seguir avanzando ese proceso, pero no solamente
300 es nosotros sino que ya tenemos pensadores y la legislación que se hace en el senado y
301 cámara, que nos ayuden fortalecer este proceso, porque eh, nos hemos quedado en esa
302 parte. Y la idea es seguir, seguir trabajando y seguir fortaleciendo estos procesos de la
303 identidad cultural

304 Int: Mhm, sí, claro que sí. Sí, estoy de acuerdo que es muy importante. Todo lo que me has
305 contado me ha parecido muy interesante, eh, te quería ahora preguntar entonces pues,
306 ya has hablado que, que tú sabes que hay algunos problemas o aspectos que habría que
307 mejorar, etcétera, pero en general tú cómo evaluarías todo este proceso que están
308 manejando y todo este camino que están tomando para fortalecer la lengua, y protegerla,
309 y todas la políticas que se están tomando. ¿Tú cómo lo, qué opinas al respecto a un nivel
310 muy amplio, cómo lo evaluarías?

311 J: Lo que pasa es que, eh, yo le digo, ¿no?, siempre uno hay que ser insistente y seguir el
312 sueño. Porque si usted va a depender de una identidad, van a haber muchas barreras,
313 muchas barreras, desde la institucionalidad, desde las normas, leyes, y decretos.
314 Nosotros siempre (recibimos) en contra. Pero también hay unos organizaciones, o la (O
315 y T) que fuimos reconocidos, entonces metemos por allá, nosotros creo que tenemos
316 unas ganancias. Entonces hay que saber defender nuestros derechos. Si vamos al
317 contexto nacional pues eh, el gobierno colombiano lo, los políticos no nos van a creer.

318 Pero si vamos, si vamos a, a más allá, donde nos van a fortalecer pues, obviamente creo
319 que vamos a tener unas ganancias. Es ese el pensamiento de nosotros, desde la
320 colectividad. Y lo otro es que también ha-, hace falta, falta de voluntades. Porque uno
321 puede ser de derecha, extrema derecha, pero si una comunidad, si un pueblo, si un país
322 necesita avanzar en ciertos procesos, por qué tiene que haber una, una dualidad que
323 nosotros llamamos, entonces si vamos a fortalecer pues creo que tiene que haber
324 (voluntad) pero las voluntades se, no se, no, no hay, o sea, por eso es que nosotros
325 hacemos movilizaciones, protestas. Por qué, porque a través de eso eh, nosotros
326 seguimos y ya de seguir luchando y dependiendo por este medio, por este mecanismo.
327 Porque no hay otra para defender a un pueblo, a un país, que en este momento estamos
328 pasando. Y en ese momento uno, otro es porque a veces uno tiene temor, no solamente
329 uno sino que la comunidad. Por qué, porque nos están masacrando a los líderes sociales,
330 a los líderes en estos procesos, y entonces el pueblo pues, eh, en este momento aclama
331 y la idea es eh, pues defender nuestros derechos. Y si ((inaudible) si, si alguien
332 empiezan a defender, por eso fue que la tumbada de las estatuas es la reivindicación de
333 la memoria. Por qué, porque nosotros siempre nos, eh, nos conocían en los caminos
334 movilizándolo. Pero si nosotros no buscamos otros medios, a nosotros no van a creer,
335 entonces fue por la, fuimos por la tumbada de las estatuas que es una memoria
336 significativa para nosotros, para el mundo occidental creo que no lo ven de esa manera,
337 pero nosotros sí que, que, queremos reivindicar desde la memoria histórica, desde la
338 identidad, desde la autonomía, desde la cosmovisión. Y ese es el proceso que estamos
339 encaminados

340 Int: Sí, wow, me dejaste un poco sin palabras. Ehm, espero que mi, mi trabajo pueda
341 contribuir aunque sea un pequeño pasito en esa dirección. Ehm, eh, sí. Creo que ya
342 hemos cubierto todo, más o menos. De pronto te preguntaría ehm, también como, tú
343 qué, qué sugerencia tendrías, o como qué consideras que sería un paso que todavía es
344 muy importante dar, que tal vez es un poco, una cosa un poco más allá de lo que ya se
345 está haciendo. Consideras que, que, qué cosa considerarías que sería importante hacer
346 todavía para seguir, como un gran paso que haya que dar para que puedan continuar en
347 el camino y en el proceso en el que van

348 J: Pues, la idea es, o sea, ya tenemos una norma, una ley que nos favorece con el
349 fortalecimiento de, de, de, de, de, de nuestros lenguas eh, propias. Yo considero que en
350 este momento pues, aunque nosotros eh, pues estamos avanzados, estamos ya digamos
351 institucionalizado en un currículo propio, y este, y estamos implementando, pero
352 muchos pueblos todavía, o sea, no han avanzado en ese proceso. Entonces yo sugiero,
353 sugeriría que de los ciento seis pueblos de Colombia, más de América Latina y en
354 Europa, inclusive no están reconocidos. Entonces que se vuelva como algo
355 constitucional en cada país, y que sigamos fortaleciendo. Eh, algunos, algunos pueblos
356 originarios tienen mucha experiencia, mucho proceso, pero algunos todavía desconocen
357 de estas normas. Entonces la idea es, o sea, como fortalecer y unir como, en defensa de
358 nuestros derechos, y más en la identidad cultural, para que no se (lleve) a nuestros
359 jóvenes, no se migren a las ciudades, sino que sean eh, autosuficientes en nuestros
360 territorios. Porque queremos fortalecer la identidad en verdad, lo que viene, eh, ya ha
361 empezado las guerras y ha, no solamente con armas sino ya empezó con químicos.
362 Entonces la idea es ir previniendo. Pero siempre creo que unidos hacemos más eh,
363 esfuerzo y tenemos más posibilidades de defender eh, estos procesos

364 Int: Mhm, eh, muchas gracias. Estoy muy de acuerdo con, contigo. Eh, creo que por ahora
 365 cubriste todas las preguntas que yo tenía planeadas. Ehm, ¿habría otra cosa que te
 366 gustaría añadir, algo que te parezca importante mencionar, o algo que tal vez consideras
 367 que vale la pena decir todavía eh, pues sobre lo que hemos estado hablando?

368 J: Pues eh, es bueno que desde las academias no solamente nacionales, sino insti-,
 369 internacionales, que estamos hablando de Suiza, ¿no?

370 Int: De Austria

371 J: Austria. De Austria. Pues también que seamos, digamos partícipes en estos procesos, y
 372 es fundamental que al menos eh, estos países sepan que el, habemos pueblos originarios
 373 con una identidad y con un pensamiento y con una cosmovisión propia. Y defendiendo
 374 nuestros derechos desde la madre tierra y del ser humano. Y la parte ambiental que es
 375 fundamental en este momento, para nosotros ya hay unos mandatos propios. Estamos
 376 tratando de ya hacer en Namui wam los mandatos y entonces, ya hacer, hacerlo visible
 377 mejor dicho. Entonces que nos ayuden a, a visibilizar los pueblos originarios, no
 378 solamente nosotros como pueblo Misak sino el pueblo de los seis cientos, de los ciento
 379 seis pueblos que estamos hablando a nivel, a nivel nacional. En América Latina y, y en
 380 otros países

381 Int: Mhm. Sí, pues espero, espero en serio que pueda yo ayudar aunque sea un poquito a
 382 poner un granito de arena y espero hacer justicia con el trabajo que estoy haciendo a
 383 todo este proceso que me parece que es muy importante y realmente es momento de
 384 que ya ocurra, porque ya es, han sido muchos años de invisibilidad y ya es hora de que
 385 la gente se de cuenta, ¿no?, pues que los pueblos como el tuyo existen, están ahí, tienen
 386 derechos y no tenemos por qué pasarles por encima, digamos

387 J: Claro

388 Int: Ehm, sí, creo que eso es todo. Si hubiera algo más, eh, te lo preguntaría muy
 389 concretamente. Muchísimas gracias por, por tu ayuda

390 J: Sí, si algo yo te envío más del link de la institución. Ahí hay unos libros importantes
 391 que usted puedes bajar y estudiar. Hay muchos libros de, de, algunos compañeros que
 392 hicieron el pregrado, de maestría y doctorado algunos. Hay libros importantes de la
 393 región entonces para que, pues revise y a ver

394 Int: Sí, eso sería muy, muy útil también. Porque pues también algo tendré que decir sobre,
 395 sobre ustedes en particular y sería muy bueno tener un poco de información salida de
 396 ustedes mismos y no otra cosa que escribió quien sabe quien. Eh, sí, muchísimas gracias
 397 y creo que eso es todo. Cualquier cosa lo que te dije, te aviso y agradecería cualquier
 398 cosa que me puedas enviar adicional a, bueno, cualquier cosa de las que me has contado
 399 que me puedas enviar

400 J: Perfecto, listo. De todas maneras ojalá que, que sirva ese proceso y que no sea la primera
 401 vez sino que podemos compartir estas experiencias. Que pena, estaba en una reunión y
 402 entonces eh, se me hizo tarde y, y llegué acá, y entré mejor dicho a almorzar tarde
 403 entonces

404 Int: No, no hay problema

405 J: De todas maneras saludos a su familia y estaremos atentos en este momento para, no sé
406 si está de noche o si está de día por ahí, que nosotros acá estamos de día

407 Int: Eh, no, ya, ya está de noche. Pero no, no hay problema que igual, pues estoy en mi casa
408 entonces estoy, estoy cómoda

409 J: Ah bueno, listo

410 Int: Bueno, perfecto, muchísimas gracias y ah, una última pregunta, ehm, en la, para la
411 entrevista a ti te gustaría que usara un pseudónimo o estás cómodo con que utilice tu
412 nombre y de información más específica

413 J: Mi nombre, no hay problema, del pueblo, sí

414 Int: Del pueblo Misak, sí. Bueno, perfecto, muchísimas gracias y yo también te, te estaré
415 mandando el trabajo cuando esté listo. Obviamente me falta todavía una parte de
416 analizar las entrevistas y transcribirlas, etcétera, pero cuando lo tenga todo listo, te lo
417 haré llegar también. Muchísimas gracias

418 J: Perfecto. Gracias a usted, que esté muy bien, que pase buena tarde. Gracias, muy amable

419 Int: Gracias, hasta luego

420 J: Hasta luego, gracias

Appendix B

- 1 Int: Bueno. Perfecto, entonces ya está grabando. Eh, hola D, bienvenida.
- 2 D: Gracias
- 3 Int: Ehm, me presento. Eh, mi nombre es L.G y soy estudiante de la universidad de Viena
4 en Austria. Estudio la maestría en traducción e interpretación y para mi tesis de grado
5 pues estoy escribiendo sobre la política de lenguas en Colombia, en lo que respecta a
6 las lenguas indígenas. Entonces la idea de las entrevistas es escuchar cómo se vive desde
7 el lado de una persona que habla una lengua indígena y que tiene una lengua indígena
8 como lengua materna, porque claramente yo, como persona que solo habla español, no,
9 no tengo ese conocimiento ni, entonces me interesa conocer tu perspectiva y eh, como
10 te pregunté ahorita, estoy grabando esta, esta entrevista para poder luego transcribirla y
11 para usarla en la tesis. Pero en cualquier momento puedes retirarte si así lo deseas
- 12 D: Vale, gracias. Te autorizo a que grabes
- 13 Int: Muchísimas gracias. Eh, bueno, entonces para comenzar, eh, cuéntame un poco sobre
14 ti, lo que consideres relevante, de dónde eres, dónde vives, a qué te dedicas, etcétera
- 15 D: Bueno, eh, mi nombre es D.J.M, yo soy mujer indígena comunicadora social periodista,
16 eh, hice mi maestría y mi pregrado en la universidad Externado, pregrado en
17 comunicación social periodismo, maestría en comunicación política. Estuve más de
18 nueve años en Bogotá. Eh, mi territorio de origen es acá en el departamento del Cauca,
19 en el nororiente, cerca a Popayán, en las montañas andinas, digámoslo así. Eh, entonces
20 yo vivo acá y este año vuelvo y retorno de haber de, eh, luego de haber estado más de
21 nueve años en Bogotá
- 22 Int: Bueno, eh, muy bien, muchas gracias, yo he estado por ahí y me, me pareció un sitio
23 muy bonito, realmente. Entonces bueno, eh, continuando, ahora te querría preguntar
24 sobre tu lengua materna. Cuál, cuál es tu lengua materna y si me puedes contar un poco
25 sobre, sobre ella
- 26 D: Bueno, eh, a nosotros eh, como pueblo Misak nos conocen como hijos del agua, la
27 palabra y los sueños. Cada uno de los pueblos indígenas tiene su, su origen de vida,
28 digámoslo así. Y en Colombia hay más de ciento quince pueblos indígenas. Entonces
29 estamos dentro de ellos, el pueblo Misak. Y el origen es desde la palabra del idioma
30 propio, el idioma de nosotros es Namtrik, yo luego te lo escribo por WhatsApp, para
31 que lo, lo escribas, es el Namtrik, y es una parte de la identidad de nosotros. Yo creo
32 que el idioma de nosotros, el idioma Namtrik es uno, una de las puertas para seguir
33 fortaleciendo nuestra identidad. Eh, también es una forma de comunicación para
34 advertir, prevenir, y también para curar eh, estando en el territorio. Eh, y también este,
35 es uno de los pilares para nosotros seguir pues viviendo en este gran espacio que pues
36 no solo está la lengua materna, sino el idioma prestado que es el español, como dicen
37 nuestros Mayores
- 38 Int: Mhm, eh, bueno, eh, ahora ya que entonces mencionas que tienes ambas, tienes los dos,
39 el idioma prestado y la, y la lengua materna, ehm, te preguntaría sobre tu experiencia

- 40 con el español. ¿Dónde lo aprendiste, cuándo, en qué espacios? Cuéntame cómo llegaste
41 a adquirirlo como lengua prestada
- 42 D: Bueno, el español yo lo aprendí fue ya en la escuela, en la escuela nos enseñan pues los
43 dos, el idioma propio y el español. El idioma propio pues desde que estamos en la, en
44 el vientre de nuestra madre, nuestras mamitas pues siempre nos cantan, nos hablan es
45 en, en idioma. Y uno cuando nace pues ya viene hablando con el idioma. Y ya cuando
46 uno ingresa a, a la escuela, al bachiller, o va saliendo fuera del territorio, pues se va
47 acoplando a, al idioma prestado para poder tratar de entender esa gente que no nos
48 entiende a nosotros
- 49 Int: Bueno, sí, es, es verdad. Me lo puedo imaginar. Ehm, entonces bueno, acabas de
50 mencionar que es tratar de acoplarse y de entender a esta gente que no los entiende,
51 pero entonces, digamos tú en que, en cuáles espacios tienes que tratar de entendernos,
52 digamos, y en cuáles estás con la gente que sí, a los que sí entiendes, por decirlo de
53 alguna forma
- 54 D: Bueno, en cuáles espacios a mí me dio duro, fue la universidad, pregrado, porque pues
55 yo hice la primaria y el bachiller acá en el territorio y siento que el, el tema académico
56 es, pues calmado digamos. Pero cuando tú vas a una universidad como es el Externado,
57 entonces ya la dinámica de la lectura, el lenguaje, es más académico, más para entender
58 solo ellos, más no el resto. Entonces ahí se me dificultó un poco, también el saber
59 interpretar y entender las lecturas teóricas que nos daban a, a conocer, eh, y también
60 me, me era difícil es entender las leyes y los decretos que salían del senado, de la
61 cámara, porque pues eso era más jurídico, más, más propio de ellos. Eh, dónde logro
62 entender y moverme muy bien, obviamente en mi territorio con mi idioma propio, pero
63 también con otros pueblos indígenas, con los otros pueblos indígenas, a pesar de que
64 no, no hablo el idioma de ellos y ellos no entienden el mío, pues con el español uno
65 fluye y entiende la dinámica de lo que ellos están viviendo, y a partir de ahí pues yo,
66 yo, yo me siento bien estando o caminando otros territorios indígenas
- 67 Int: Bueno, muy, muy bien, muchas gracias. Ahora entonces te voy a preguntar sobre un
68 par de sitios específicos, ya con eso me respondiste un poco en términos como de la
69 educación y el aspecto jurídico, pero entonces por ejemplo en cuestiones como de
70 servicios de salud, o en trámites que tienes que, que uno tiene que hacer directamente
71 con el gobierno, ¿eso cómo se maneja? ¿En qué, de qué forma se maneja? Primero por
72 un lado ¿cómo te sientes tú si tienes que usar el español?, y en segundo lugar si tienes
73 que usar el español, o si, ¿qué opciones tienes para hablar tu propia lengua?
- 74 D: Bueno, fren-, frente a ello con, me hacía re-, recordar por lo menos cuando uno va a
75 sacar el DANE, o cuando va a sacar el certificado de, del DANE, o sea son códigos,
76 son cosas que uno ni, ni siquiera se espera, y cuando uno pues termina la profesión y
77 para poder trabajar toca ingresar en eso. Entonces qué hago yo, pues pido asesoría
78 jurídica eh, antes de, como se dicen los abuelos meter la pata. Y, y si hay por lo menos
79 eh, actas o cosas que llegan del Estado por lo menos al territorio, siempre trato de
80 moverme con una asesoría jurídica, o alguien experto en esos temas. Y luego yo lo que
81 hago es tratar de interpretar a la gente, porque traducirlo no podemos, hay términos en
82 español que, que no se pueden traducir sino que es que es tratar de interpretar. Entonces
83 ha sido también un reto porque yo siendo profesional a veces me, me pierdo con, con,
84 con esas lecturas o esas dinámicas pues prestadas del español. Y ahora imagínese una

85 persona que nunca sale del territorio, pues se le dificulta muchísimo. Entonces eh, es,
86 ese ha sido como el gran reto de yo saber traducir, saber interpretar y también saber eh,
87 de recibir asesoría desde un lenguaje sencillo en el que yo también puedo entender y
88 pueda captar como los mensajes que quieren dar pues, con documentos y cosas que
89 llegan del, del Estado, tanto personal como pues cosas que llegan para todos

90 Int: Mhm, eh, bueno, esto es muy interesante porque mencionas algo que claramente me
91 interesa, que es interpretar, ehm, entonces pues, ¿tú conoces de algún otro, de alguna
92 opción digamos que ofrezca el Estado o alguna institución específica para hacer eso que
93 tú haces de tratar de interpretar y de explicar y lograr que la gente entienda, qué, de qué
94 se trata?

95 D: Bueno, yo creo que el reto de, del Estado colombiano después de que salió la ley de
96 lenguas, muchos se han empezado a, a rasgarse digamos la, la cabeza de, del tema a
97 partir de la constitución del noventa y uno, que Colombia es diversa, (multiétnica) y
98 pluricultural, y sale el tema de la ley de lenguas. Pues obviamente el Estado por
99 diferentes intereses quiere acoplarse también al tema de la interpretación y la
100 traducción. Entonces está por lo menos eh, la, el Instituto Caro Cuervo, eh, que hace
101 interpretación y traducción de las lenguas nativas, y los temas que ellos quieran. Está
102 también la traducción e interpretación con la Corte Constitucional, eh, está también
103 traducción e interpretación del acuerdo de paz, del capítulo étnico, entonces hay muchos
104 pue-, ahí hay que tener en cuenta que hay pueblos que hablan e interpretan el idioma, y
105 hay pueblos que por diferentes situaciones han perdido su idioma tanto para hablar, para
106 interpretar. Entonces el Estado ha tratado de, de, de, de mirar ese tema un poquito, sí,
107 porque val-, vale la pena. Entonces, y eso mismo es lo que tiene que llegar al resultado
108 a las, a las comunidades para que, eh, pues se logre estos grandes desafíos que muchas
109 veces nos cuesta porque somos muy pocos los que logramos eh, salir de la academia,
110 digámoslo así, para servirle de, a, a aportar a la comunidad, pero también tratar de llevar
111 esa información que sale de afuera hacia el territorio

112 Int: Mhm, sí, claro. Eh, pues ahora que mencionas la ley de lenguas, ehm, tú, ¿tú cómo la
113 evaluarías? O sea, ¿a ti te parece que la ley así en la forma que tiene es una ley que,
114 digamos, en cuanto a objetivos tiene objetivos que van acorde a lo que, a lo que ustedes
115 como comunidad desean? O sea, ¿te parece que es apropiada y adecuada para sus, los
116 propios objetivos que ustedes tienen?

117 D: Bueno, yo, yo, yo lo leí una vez así a, a grosso general, y hay muchas cosas que
118 realmente por lo menos en, en la lectura e interpretación logra aplo-, acoplarse. Pero
119 como te decía al inicio, somos ciento quince pueblos indígenas, ciento quince pueblos
120 indígenas en donde manejamos diferentes contextos, diferentes dinámicas, diferentes
121 planes de vida, y eso no se muestra. Ahí dice que es un derecho y un deber, el decreto,
122 pero lo muestra generalizado. Yo creo que hay que mirar eh, realmente eh, qué es lo
123 que quieren los pueblos indígenas frente a la ley de lenguas. Y uno de ellos es hacer la
124 consulta previa a los pueblos indígenas, antes de aprobar o sacar estos, estas leyes y
125 estos decretos. Aporta un poquito pero también eh, pues frente a la dinámica de los
126 pueblos se requiere mucho, se requiere mucho conocerlos y también se requiere que la
127 palabra de ellos sea escrita en, en esos decretos y en esas leyes

128 Int: Mhm, eh, sí. Sí, porque hasta donde tengo entendido la ley no, no consultaron sino
129 simplemente la sacaron

- 130 D: No, no, apareció. Porque de hecho yo ni sabía, yo ni sabía cuándo una vez en un
131 evento fue que hicieron el, el tema de la ley de lenguas y pues ahí fue que yo googlé y
132 claro, ahí apareció y leí, pero pues le falta muchísimo
- 133 Int: Que te enteraste. Bueno, muy bien. Ehm, entonces ahora te preguntaría, ya que ya
134 hablamos de, de la ley de lenguas, te preguntaría un poco sobre, ¿tú cómo ves esa idea
135 de tener intérpretes? Pues ya medio lo has hablado un poco pero ¿tú, tú crees que usar
136 traducción e interpretación tendría un efecto positivo en, o sea, de una manera un poco
137 más generalizada y no tanto casos puntuales sino que hubiera la oportunidad, tú crees
138 que eso beneficiaría a la lengua?
- 139 D: Bueno, yo creo que depende. Yo siempre digo de los contextos, porque muchos pueblos
140 obviamente se beneficiarían, otros no, entonces la interpretación y la traducción
141 depende de qué es lo que le quieres aportar o llevar a la comunidad. Porque hay cosas
142 que realmente no pueden salir de la comunidad, son cosas reservadas, y hay cosas que
143 sí realmente pueden salir a, a, a la sociedad en general. O así como hay cosas que desde
144 afuera pueden llegar hacia el territorio. Entonces yo creo que ahí es de saber interpretar
145 y, y traducir depende de, de los contextos y las temáticas que se quieran abordar dentro
146 de los pueblos indígenas
- 147 Int: Mhm, sí, claro. Ehm, entonces ahora que, que mencionas esto y que bueno, todo
148 depende y todo depende, en el caso particular de, de tu, de tu comunidad, ehm, ¿de qué
149 manera ustedes intentan como, traer estos contenidos? Pues además de lo que ya me
150 contaste que tú misma te encargas de recibir asesoría y de contarle a la gente, ¿de, de
151 qué otra forma ustedes encuentran formas de acercarse a los contenidos que les
152 interesan para la comunidad de ustedes?
- 153 D: Bueno, especialmente mi comunidad de qué forma (intentamos) acercarnos con los
154 diferentes contenidos, a través de la radio comunitaria. La radio comunitaria es una
155 herramienta muy poderosa para, para la audiencia, y también es de, es de saber
156 interpretar y hablar para la, para la audiencia, porque son espacios diferentes y son
157 complejos, porque mucha gente no sale, no se mueve, solo (prende la radio) y escucha.
158 Entonces eh, ese ha sido como una herramienta muy vital eh, para los pueblos indígenas,
159 más acá en el departamento del Cauca, que hay más de doce emisoras comunitarias
160 indígenas. Entonces siempre se trabaja en esa traducción, interpretación desde el idioma
161 y, y también frente a las amenazas o exigencias o advertencias en idioma propio. Eso
162 es uno de los grandes retos y desafíos que se tienen frente a las emisoras
- 163 Int: Mhm, eh la, la profesora Y.R, que fue la que me dio tu contacto, me dijo que tú, que tú
164 tenías una emisora. ¿Me podrías contar tal vez un poco más al respecto? Porque cuando
165 ella me contó, yo pensé que entonces sería muy interesante tú qué tienes que decir sobre
166 este tema, porque claro, es algo que te interesa y ahora me doy cuenta que tienes algo
167 que ver ahí, no solamente como, como miembro sino juegas un papel entonces, si me
168 pudieras contar más
- 169 D: Ajá, sí, bueno, eh, este año retorné al territorio, eh, bueno, mi, mi trabajo ahorita, me
170 estoy moviendo virtualmente, eh, asesoro dos, dos organizaciones de comunicac-, en el
171 tema de comunicación indígena. Uno con agenda propia, que es la red de periodistas
172 interculturales, eh y otra que es Akubadaura, que es una comunidad de juristas
173 indígenas. Entonces yo asesoro esos temas virtualmente y pues regresé al territorio y

174 acá, en cada uno de los programas o proyectos, son las autoridades los que delegan el
175 personal. Entonces me llaman este año a asumir la coordinación general del programa
176 de comunicaciones, que es la radio comunitaria. Entonces estoy en, en ese papel, eh de,
177 de coordinar y también de asesorar y también de orientar y reorientar pues a, a mi pueblo
178 que acá en el territorio de origen son más de diecisiete mil habitantes, entre hombres,
179 mujeres, niños, entonces hay una diversidad de, de audiencia digámoslo así. Eh, y pues
180 el reto es que el ochenta por ciento sea en idioma propio, con temas ((inaudible)) eh,
181 hablados, música, ¿sí?, para el, para volver a realizar pues tantos temas que están
182 llegando desde el territorio. Ese es como lo que te contaría pues de, con mi papel acá
183 en el territorio

184 Int: Bueno, muy, muy interesante, un, seguro que, que te encuentras con desafíos muy
185 interesantes

186 D: Totalmente

187 Int: Y pues hablando como de eso, de la dificultad de interpretar algunas cosa que
188 simplemente son conceptos que se manejan en español que ustedes no manejan, ehm,
189 ¿cómo ha sido para ti ese proceso como de aprender a hacerlo? Porque, cómo, o, o tú
190 fuiste, o sea, por lo que me contabas de, de tus estudios, digamos tú no te formaste como
191 intérprete pero aun así es el papel que tú estás jugando, entonces ¿cómo fue ese proceso
192 como de, de hacerlo y de aprender a hacerlo y de ubicar las coas y las dificultades?

193 D: Ajá, bueno, eh, cómo fue el proceso, cómo es que es, en el camino se aprende a
194 machetazos es que dice un abuelo. Eh, eso fue así porque pues yo solo estudiaba, de
195 hecho pues cuando está en Bogotá conoce a mucha gente, instituciones, universidades,
196 y en ese tiempo eh, no me acuerdo qué era lo, creo que era lo del capítulo étnico, del
197 que tocaba interpretar. Entonces estaban, como la universidad Externado se contacta
198 todo mundo, estaban buscando intérpretes indígenas, porque querían traducir el acuerdo
199 de paz. Entonces se seleccionaron varios pueblos y dentro de ellos estaba la lengua
200 Misak, y no habían hallado a nadie. Entonces no sé quién le, quien referenció,
201 referenciaron mi nombre, entonces yo les dije 'yo no puedo eh, traducir tal como dice
202 aquí. Yo tengo que es interpretar'. Entonces eh, pues ahí empezó mi, mi, mi rutina
203 digámoslo así, o, o las mismas tesis que ha-, que hacen compañeras y compañeros en
204 idioma, que las universidades me contactan a mí, y pues porque dicen que yo lo, lo
205 interpreto y traduzco muy bien, soy una, a lo que se quiere comunicar. Luego ya fueron
206 libros, audios, eh, para radio, para eh, escritos, mensajes para redes sociales en idioma
207 propio. Entonces como que el mismo espacio y el mismo escenario te obliga y te exige
208 a que te vayas preparando, no solo la potencialidad de uno sino el deber ser de saber
209 interpretar y, y saber traducir ese mensaje, desde afuera hacia adentro y desde adentro
210 hacia afuera

211 Int: Mhm, eh, bueno, te, me tomaste por sorpresa cuando ahorita me dijiste que tú también
212 lo hacías, y ahora saber que eres traductora de libros, de tesis, de todo, eh, pues me
213 parece muy, muy interesante y tal vez no es del todo relevante para lo que te quería
214 preguntar pero, ehm, me parece muy, muy interesante lo que dices que, que, que no,
215 que lo tienes que interpretar porque no lo puedes decir así nomás. Y entonces ahora te
216 querría preguntar si tú sientes que en ocasiones se queda parte del mensaje en ese
217 interpretar, si tú crees que a veces tienes que dejar una parte del sentido para poder
218 entregárselo al público que, que te está escuchando

219 D: Sí, sí, ha sido una, una dinámica de aprendizaje porque hay mensajes que uno dice, yo
 220 quiero deci-, eh, eh, decir, decir tal como lo dice aquí, o interpretar tal, pero a veces uno
 221 no encuentra la, la forma o no halla la forma. Entonces hay cosas que se quedan cortas,
 222 hay cosas que se quedan a mitad del camino, y hay cosas que llegan preciso y conciso
 223 a lo que se quiere manejar. Entonces depende pues de, de lo que llegue y de lo que pues,
 224 se pueda dar a conocer y llegar con ese mensaje

225 Int: Wow, tal vez me gustaría a mí también hablar, aprender alguna y poder hacer eso
 226 también

227 D: De una, de una, eso es tener camino

228 Int: Sí, eso, eso me interesa. Está ahí en, en los objetivos a futuro. Pero bueno, retornando,
 229 eh, entonces ahora te quería preguntar si entonces dentro del territorio, todos ustedes,
 230 pues obviamente todos hablan la lengua materna, y intentan que en su mayoría todo lo
 231 que entra sea en la lengua, y pues obviamente igual están en Colombia y el español pues
 232 sigue siendo el, la lengua oficial, pero dentro del territorio entonces efectivamente
 233 ustedes son autónomos y manejan todo en su lengua, de manera autónoma

234 D: Ajá, sí, sí, porque el territorio es ancestral y el territorio es de las autoridades y del
 235 pueblo, entonces hay autonomía frente al manejo de, del idioma propio acá

236 Int: Okay, muy bien. Ehm, y entonces si una persona sale, tuviera que salir del territorio no
 237 sé, ir a Popayán a lo que fuera, la gente entonces, ¿tú, tú crees que se manejan bien en
 238 español o a veces igual llevan un acompañante, o prefieren una persona digamos, como
 239 tú que los acompañe, que saben que, que lo maneja bien? ¿Cómo, cómo verías eso?

240 D: Pues la, la verdad, cuando es para, para una institución, o para, para programas o
 241 proyectos con instancias digamos gubernamentales o internacionales, pues ahí se lleva
 242 la, el lenguaje digamos académico preparatorio, con ayuda. Pero ya cuando quieren salir
 243 ellos solos, ellos se arriesgan y se van. Entonces eso es ya si van a mercar o quieren
 244 hacer vueltas personales en Popayán o en Cali, pues se van, así no hablen bien el
 245 español. Ellos se defienden. Pero ya cuando es ya como decisiones pues eh, políticas
 246 digamos hacia afuera, pues ya lleva intérpretes o traductores

247 Int: Mhm, ya lo preparan. Y estos intérpretes o traductores ¿son miembros de la comunidad
 248 que ofr-, que hacen el trabajo? ¿O, si, o sea, como en tu caso?

249 D: Sí, sí, la mayoría son ya, ya somos preparados académicamente y ya conocemos un
 250 contexto y una realidad, entonces eh, somos los que vamos, pues la mayoría somos pues
 251 jóvenes que apenas nos estamos preparando como en la formación política territorial,
 252 pero pues desde afuera tenemos un poco más de conocimiento que (desde antes) se
 253 pueda lograr

254 Int: Okay, bueno, muy, muy, muy interesante. Eh, siendo muy sincera me, me tomó por,
 255 como por sorpresa eh, como escuchar esto. Yo tenía una imagen un poco distinta en mi
 256 cabeza de las respuestas que iba a recibir pero me he sorprendido muy gratamente. Ehm,
 257 y entonces ahora te, te preguntaría si, si tu pudieras decidir y tomar decisiones, ¿tú qué
 258 sugerencia tendrías? ¿O tú cómo consideras que se podría seguir avanzando en este

259 camino de proteger la lengua, y como mencionabas al principio, la identidad que ustedes
 260 no quieren perder y que está amarrada a la lengua materna?

261 D: Mhm, bueno, yo creo que no sería se-, sugerencia sino que es un llamado a, a las
 262 familias, ¿no?, eso ya es de, de cada uno de los hogares, de que pues hablemos el idioma.
 263 Que uno ya cuando empieza el, primaria o bachiller ahí uno aprende el español, pero
 264 siempre tratar de que el idioma propio sea el primer idioma, que uno enseñe y aprenda
 265 pues, el niño a escuchar también. Y a partir de ahí pues ya ellos se defienden. Ahorita
 266 tenemos ya casos que muchos de nuestros chicos hablan tres, cuatro idiomas, ¿sí?, de
 267 pueblos indígenas, o el idioma inglés de afuera, el francés, el portugués, entonces son
 268 grandes retos eh, para ellos mismos. Entonces tratar de que ellos siempre vayan
 269 creciendo así, hablando, multilingüe digámoslo así, pero ya está es en los padres y en
 270 los hogares

271 Int: Mhm. Y entonces en tu caso particular, tu familia sí siempre, lo que contabas, desde
 272 que naciste, te hablaban, te cantaban

273 D: En el idioma.

274 Int: Mhm

275 D: Sí, siempre

276 Int: Y entonces con tu familia ese es el idioma de tu familia, totalmente

277 D: Sí, ese es el, el idioma de mi familia es propio, es (nuestro)

278 Int: Bueno, eh, muchísimas gracias D

279 D: Bueno, con gusto

280 Int: Yo creo que, yo creo que más o menos, bueno no, más o menos no, yo creo que, que
 281 tengo todo. De pronto te preguntaría un poco sobre la, la participación política. Ya no
 282 tanto a nivel de leyes sino más bien como participación política ahora que justo venimos
 283 de elecciones. Eh, ese tipo de informaciones las, ¿se reciben digamos? Como por
 284 ejemplo para las elecciones y todo esto, ¿esta información de alguna forma se, se pasa
 285 también en la lengua o se consume digamos de alguna forma en español? O sea, ¿cómo,
 286 cómo es el asunto de la participación política?

287 D: Pues, el tema político acá se analizan las dos versiones, en español y en idioma propio.
 288 Ya son desde las autoridades y ya a partir de las autoridades empiezan pues a, a
 289 informar. Pero ya todo es eh, la decisión desde las autoridades, como digamos sembrar
 290 consciencia frente al tema político. Pues eso ya es más interno, con las autoridades

291 Int: Okay. Bueno, entonces muchas gracias D. ¿Hay algo más que te gustaría añadir, algo
 292 que quisieras decir?

293 D: No. No, yo creo que no. Ya, ya, ya estoy bien, ya voy a entrar a otra reunión

294 Int: Bueno, muchísimas gracias, eh, la última pregunta rápida sería eh, si, si tú prefieres que
295 yo utilice un pseudónimo o tu nombre. O sea, que ponga D en el trabajo o pongo un
296 pseudónimo

297 D: No, pon el nombre, no hay ningún problema

298 Int: Listo, perfecto D. Entonces yo te estaré mandando mi trabajo cuando esté listo

299 D: Listo, vale. Listo pues

300 Int: Si tuviera alguna pregunta te diría, muchísimas gracias, que tengas buen día

301 D: Un abrazo y muchos éxitos

302 Int: Muchísimas gracias D, chao

Abstract (English)

This paper examines the language and translation policy in Colombia and contrasts its findings with qualitative interviews conducted with members of the Misak Indigenous community in the country, to enquire about their perspective regarding existing policies and their implementation. To provide the necessary background for this analysis, this paper explores three main topics: first, language policy in a general sense; second, an overview of Indigenous peoples and their languages; third, Colombia's particular historical and social context and its effects on the Indigenous communities in the country. The analysis of the interviews suggest that even if there are policies protecting and promoting Indigenous languages in Colombia, the policies will hardly materialize unless the government and the communities make an effort and actively work towards making them a reality.

Abstract (German)

In der vorliegenden Arbeit wird die Sprachen- und Translationspolitik Kolumbiens analysiert und ein Vergleich zu den Einstellungen und Wahrnehmungen der kolumbianischen indigenen Gemeinschaft der Misak gezogen. Dafür wurden mit Angehörigen der Gemeinschaft qualitative Interviews geführt. Um das nötige Hintergrundwissen für die Analyse zu schaffen, wird zu Beginn die Sprachenpolitik im Allgemeinen näher untersucht. Danach folgt ein Überblick über wichtige linguistische und zeitgeschichtliche Aspekte indigener Gemeinschaften Lateinamerikas. Ein weiterer Fokus liegt auf wichtige historische Ereignisse der jüngeren Geschichte Kolumbiens und deren Auswirkungen auf die indigenen Gemeinschaften im Land. Die Analyse zeigt, dass Gesetze und Politiken zum Schutz von indigenen Sprachen in Kolumbien nur unzureichend umgesetzt werden. Wenn die Regierung und die indigenen Gemeinschaften sich nur unzureichend beteiligen, werden die am Papier schon fortschrittlichen Schutzmaßnahmen schwer erfolgreich sein.