

Book Review

Ivonne Heinze Balcazar
University of Kansas

Kloss, H. (1998). *The American Bilingual Tradition* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC and McHenry, IL: The Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems, 347 pp.

In *The American Bilingual Tradition*, Heinze Kloss presents research that demonstrates a continuous bilingual tradition in the United States since colonial times. Originally published in 1977, this book is a translation of Kloss' *Das Nationalitätenrecht der Vereinigten Staaten* published in 1963. These publications were based on Kloss' original research for his *Das Volksgruppenrecht in den Vereinigten Staaten* (Vol. 1, 1940; Vol. 2, 1942). This 1998 edition of the English translation is timely and important because it debunks the myth of the United States as a monolingual nation at a time when this myth has political resonance. This new edition is keenly welcomed by scholars of language policy and multilingual studies.

Kloss' research shows that historically in the United States, non-English minorities did not eagerly shed their cultures and languages, but struggled to keep them by pressing vigorously for legislation at federal, state, and local levels, some of which became law. Particularly, language minorities sought curricula in parochial, private, and public schools that integrated non-English languages as subjects of study or as tools of instruction. Further, Kloss proposes that the common bond between different language groups in the United States is not principally the English language, but the political ideals embodied in the U.S. Constitution of 1789-1791.

Kloss' work is pioneering, insightful, and ambitious, encompassing the histories of U.S. language policies toward incorporated outlying areas, for example, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines (independent since 1946); and unincorporated possessions, for example, Guam, American Samoa, the Ryukyu Islands, the Bonin Islands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the American Virgin Islands, and the Canal Zone. However, the bulk of his research focuses on language policies implemented on the mainland.

Kloss' approach is essentially legalistic; that is, the framework for his approach is the law and its legislation. He utilizes particular terminology; for instance, the terms "national minority," "ethnic nationality," and "ethnic minority" are used interchangeably as linguistic, sociological, and political terms. He also utilizes new analytical criteria; he proposes, for example, that "minority law" is that body of law that regulates the coexistence of different language groups in the same state; and he defines two types of language rights: promotion-oriented rights and toleration-oriented rights. Promotion-oriented rights entail the promotion of a minority language by federal, state, or municipal authorities in legislative, administrative, and educational institutions. In this regard, Kloss indicates that, at times, the federal government has promoted non-English languages for expediency; for example, in 1917, the Foreign Language Division of the Bureau of Publicity of the Treasury Department advertised Liberty Bonds "in every language used in the United States," which resulted in the purchase of seven million "foreign language bonds" (p. 36). Toleration-oriented rights involve non-interference by federal, state, and municipal governments with efforts on the part of minorities to make use of ethnic languages in private domains, for example, newspapers, religious practices, secular associations, and private schools.

Kloss conceptualizes these rights as four "spheres": (a) the widest sphere of human, civil, and political rights protected by the first 10 amendments to the Constitution; (b) a wide sphere of the right to use one's native language; (c) a narrow sphere of the freedom to assemble and organize; and (d) the narrowest sphere of the right to private nationality schools. Within this framework, Kloss details the history of how and when these rights have been defended and extended through legislation favoring national minorities.

According to Kloss, minority law is a function of the degree to which an ethnic group has become established in its area of settlement. He thus divides language minorities into four categories (here, he examines solely European immigrants, setting aside considerations of indigenous peoples, African-Americans, and Chinese immigrants): (a) solitary original settlers—Spaniards in the Southwest and Puerto Rico, French in Louisiana, Dutch in New York, and Russians in Alaska; (b) original co-settlers—Germans in the states from New York to Georgia, and in Ohio, West Virginia and Texas; (c) solitary late settlers—approximately 1830-1850, Germans in the Midwest; and (d) late co-settlers—since 1850, French Canadians, Scandinavians, Dutch, Czechs; since 1880, eastern and southern Europeans, and Mexicans.

Kloss gives detailed accounts of the promotion-oriented nationality laws for these groups between 1638-1967. The most successful in this regard have been the older settlers, who predominated in the states of Louisiana (the Spanish and later the French), New Mexico and Colorado (Spanish), and Pennsylvania and Ohio (Germans). According to Kloss, tolerance-oriented minority rights have also been handled very generously in the United States.

However, he notes that the narrowest of his spheres—the right to schools conducted in the mother tongue—had become controversial by the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, during World War I, the wide sphere of toleration—the use of the mother tongue in public—was weakened by legal bans on all uses of the German language (Kloss notes that the town council of Findlay, Ohio levied a fine of \$25 for the use of the German language in the streets), and that before the end of the war, measures of this type were being enacted against other minority languages.

One of the strengths of Kloss' legislative approach is his emphasis on the right to self-determination, and the constitutional applications of the First Amendment to language policies affecting freedom of assembly and of the press. He also provides insight into the motivations behind some national language legislation, for example, *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that forbidding the teaching in schools of languages other than English until pupils passed the eighth grade violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Kloss notes that the justices were not particularly sympathetic toward minority law, but “because, out of their commitment to a liberal constitution and social order, they were compelled to protect even activities of citizens which they deemed insignificant, odd, or even perhaps undesirable” (p. 90).

Perhaps most importantly at this historical moment, Kloss refutes the so-called monolingual origins of this nation. His optimism about the American bilingual tradition, that is, his view that in the United States, in general, national minorities have historically enjoyed promotion-oriented and toleration-oriented rights, notwithstanding “isolated cases” of oppressive legislation, can motivate scholars and social activists to find new venues and arguments based on that tradition. By researching statutes and handbooks of judicial decisions, Kloss has unearthed facts about the history of language policy in the United States that demonstrate that this country has been multilingual from its inception through its history. In so doing, he lays important groundwork for scholars, organizers, and lawmakers.

Endnote

Nationalitätenrecht has an umlaut on the third “a.” The introduction to the second edition missed it.