

**The English-Only Movement and The Political Legitimacy of Linguistic  
Minority Rights: The Case of Spanish in the United States**

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Language, Literacy, and Culture

By

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## Abstract

This interdisciplinary study is a contribution to the field of sociolinguistics, intercultural communication studies and related major field of research. The first contribution consists of addressing the problem of recognition of the United States as a multicultural and multilingual society par excellence, hence counteracting the proponents of English as the sole official language of the United States (hereafter in this study EASOLUSA). The second contribution is to argue by contesting the authentic sociolinguistic identity of this country, the proponents of EASOLUSA demonstrate an anti-intercultural attitude and a discriminatory and oppressive action toward both minority languages and the speakers of those languages in violation of human rights (Finegan, 2004; Schiffman, 1996). This attitude not only violates the sociopolitical rights of this country's minority language speakers but also fail to promote and protect the dignity of these languages as "integrated cultural resources" and jeopardize the process of unity within diversity (King, 2011; 2013; Perley, 2011; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

To address this contestation, this study proposes a paradigm that I am calling the *existential sociolinguistic paradigm (ESP)* as an inclusive model of dealing with language issues in the context of treating languages as national and universal resources for human dignity (Fishman et al., 1968; Gumperz, 1982; Hymes, 1964; Jackson, 2008; 2013; Williams, 1977). This study employs a blended methodological framework approach, that is, an empirical philosophical investigation framework (Anderson et al., 2018). It employs rhetorical discourse analysis/ "framing" as its specific research method (Goffman, 1974; Lakoff, 2014; Numberg, 2007; 2009) and analyzes more than one

hundred and twenty texts from political speeches and newspapers' articles. This study asks and answers the following research question and sub-question:

- What are the implications of the English-Only movement proponents to make English the sole official language of the United States (EASOLUSA) and deny political legitimacy to linguistic minorities in the United States as a multicultural/multilingual society?
- In which ways may *transformational interculturality*, that is, the mutual recognition and acceptance of differences, be deployed as a set of strategies to enable negotiations toward a more humane language policy for achieving political legitimacy of linguistic minority rights and an awareness of minority languages as national and universal integrated cultural resources?

This study asserts that there cannot be a better way to defend and demonstrate the absolute respect for the fundamental values of the United States and the universal principles of human dignity than to apply the principle of what I am calling *existential recognition* and equity when making decisions about language policies or language use in public and political spaces in the United States and other multilingual/multicultural societies (Fanon, [1961] 2004; [1952] 2008; Fromm, 1955; Herring, 2011; Marcel, 1963).