

# Language policy and practices in the Global North and South: Challenges, opportunities and future directions

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Prof. Juan Eduardo Bonnin, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina

## Language policy and indigenous healthcare in Argentina: From an ideology of access to a politics of identity

**Abstract:** The public health system in Argentina was designed according to the typically modern equation between citizenship, language and territory. Ethnic and linguistic diversity was invisible behind a monolingual state that questioned a supposedly monolingual population, thus preventing equal access to the health system for indigenous populations.

Although more active policies have been designed and implemented to cover traditionally excluded populations, there have been little changes in human resources, language and training. How are these policies designed and implemented in actual healthcare settings? What are their outcomes in terms of actual access to healthcare of indigenous people?

In this presentation we will address these questions through the case of linguistic policies in the area of indigenous health in Argentina, analyzing four cases of articulation between ideas about language, institutional actors and health practices: the Community Doctors Program, the Indigenous Health Area (ASI) of the National Ministry of Health, the indigenous health agents of the province of Chaco and a multilingual handbook for indigenous health care in the province of Salta.

Results show a constitutive tension between locally defined identities and Western universalistic policies, and between a heteroglossic and a monoglossic view on language as a code. In both cases, however, solidarity and interpersonal networks help to overcome exclusion from the system, thus proposing a horizon for social and ideological change.



Juan Eduardo Bonnin is a full professor of Discourse Analysis at the National University of San Martín and a Researcher at CONICET, Argentina. He is executive editor of *Sociocultural Pragmatics / Pragmatica Sociocultural* and a member of the editorial board of the *International Journal for the Sociology of Language*. His field of research is discourse analysis and interactional sociolinguistics, in the field of political discourse, religious discourse, language politics, doctor-patient interaction, and communication in the workplace. His last book is *Discourse and mental health. Voice, Inequality and Resistance in Medical Settings* (Routledge, 2019).

**Registration link:** <https://universiteitleiden.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5Atf-CrrDIpHtTalMQ7CV6Kbm9DRFJtOmPh>  
(Please remember that a valid ZOOM account will be required for registration)



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