Language Planning as a Focus for Language Correction[1]

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The perspective I take here on peoples' behavior towards language is that of *language correction*. The language correction perspective asks, what communicative *problems* or what kinds of *trouble* (the term used by ethnomethodologists, e.g. Schegloff et al. 1977) or *inadequacy* (used by Neustupný 1978) are perceived in language use? For example, two people talking to one another may disagree about the pronunciation or the spelling of a word, or one may not "know what the other means." Consequently they may refer the matter (the trouble, the inadequacy) to some third party for adjudication. Thus, a *language treatment* system is born; "specialists" come on the scene, "principles" get laid down, some people are made authorities on language use in the "national" language, other people made experts in "teaching" skills of "foreign" and "second" languages, some people develop particular skills at "drafting official letters" and so on. As discussion develops or the complexity of the language treatment system grows, some people may get embroiled in socio-political battles (e.g., I am more qualified than you are as a lexicographer, your principles concerning what is linguistically right are wrong because mine reflect majority speaker opinion). Throughout, value interpretations get assigned to the phenomena of language. Usually these values are closely related to other (i.e. social, educational, economic, ethnic, etc.) differentials in society. In fact, language treatment may get so deeply embedded in political processes that the original motivations for solving problems or for resolving inadequacies in communication are forgotten or suppressed. People may seize on an available language differential to further such goals as group interest and group distinctiveness, thus erecting new obstacles to communication.

This is not to say that liking and disliking others (because they eat fish, or have six toes, or whatever) is not part and parcel of communication. The political battles which surround language use are real and important. However, in observing and analyzing reality, these aspects of a language debate need to be viewed in relationship to communicatively corrective aspects of it. In other words, sometimes people try to fool us and tell us we have language problems when we really don't. Then again, any corrective enterprise of language treatment will inevitably be informed by some ideology, too, and it will evolve as any societal institution does.

Language planning appears to permit discussion of a very broad range of topics regardless of whether extra-linguistic, political, or corrective goals of language development are "primary." Such broad discussion suggests that there is a need to define "language planning" more precisely or to further develop scholarly terminology. One possible definition emphasizes language planning as an aspect of language correction, towards overcoming troubles in acts of speaking and writing, or as listener and reader. Language correction, thus, comprises the whole range of interventions in language. One type of language correction is language treatment which names and describes organized intervention in speaking or writing. In turn, then, *language planning* is a possible, rigorous sub-type. Treatment and planning can apply to either language determination (or status) or language development (or corpus) issues (Jernudd 1973).

By *planning* we mean:

"... changes in the systems of language code or speaking or both are planned by organizations that are established for such purpose or given a mandate to

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fulfill such purposes. As such, language planning is focused on problem-solving and is characterized by the formulation and evaluation of alternatives for solving language problems to find the best (or optimal, most efficient) decision." (Rubin and Jernudd 1979:xvi)

"Such management, planning or guidance is presumed to be not only possible but practical and necessary; thus the natural association with the institutional as the purveyor of rationality in planning. The institutional framework is usually governmentally sponsored. Its relationship to the particular language is defined, on the one hand, by the *deliberateness* in language change . . ." (Saulson 1979:161)

Language planning can be said to be an action plan, a problem-solving method for reaching some ideal in the future (cf.Ackoff 1978:26). Whether the actors do indeed make the "best decision" is not at issue and what the actors actually do, how "in fact" they behave, is subject to all the behavioral laws of psychology and administrative science (à la Simon, Cyert, March and others). It may even be that the more vigorously we take such behavioral insight into account, the "better" our decisions will be. But what is at issue is whether the actors try to negotiate what seems to them to be the most satisfactory solution to a language problem within their limits of control and cognition. This emphasizes, as Saulson puts it, that language planning "is defined by its *future-orientation*" (ib.).

According to Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971:209), future-orientation points to an important problem of knowledge, namely, whether we can ever learn what would have been the best course of action:

"The question always remains whether the interplay of variables as it actually happened was optimal. The pursuit of an optimal policy requires an explicit understanding of language development in the context of societal development."

Historical analysis will contribute to developing such knowledge. In present circumstances,

". . . language will be planned by those inclined to do so because of the larger societal development within which such planning is always interrelated . . . The real problem to be treated, therefore, is *not* whether language *should* or *can* be planned but, rather, 'how to do so most effectively in connection with prespecified criteria of success.' " (Saulson op. cit.)

From such a point of view, planning

"is a process of iteratively approximating a formal statement in which all parties agree on one programme in preference to others . . . However, the order in which arguments are stated has nothing whatsoever to do with the order in which they are actually formulated." (Faludi 1973:230)

To believe otherwise is to call on false assumptions concerning the rational planning process. In the planning process as understood here, "the role of conscious superordination of the major

interdependent social sectors belongs to the political authority" (Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971:196), normally to the political executive (politicians) and the career executive (salaried experts and administrators), the former in the legislature and the latter in public administration.

No person is free of opinion and value. The entire planning enterprise can be viewed as a political process. Through a political process, some or all members of a community are given variable opportunity to participate in designing a desirable future and finding ways of moving toward it as effectively as possible. But as we know, different communities have different kinds of political organization through which people may express preferences. There is no escaping this complexity in attempting to understand language planning processes.

When it does happen that complex tasks are broken down into parts that can be handled by any one group or individual, coordination becomes necessary. Ackoff names this the *hierarchical requirement* (1978:76) in planning and adds to it the *democratic requirement:*

"In a democracy no individual may be subjected to the control of another who is not subject to control by those over whom he has some control. In Government, for example, all officials are subject to 'the will of the governed.' "

We may agree or disagree with the democratic requirement. Unfortunately, much that goes by the name of language planning has suspended it. And, need this hierarchy of governance be coterminous with the state administration and to what extent? This author (1971) has made this issue problematical, noting that many language decisions are essentially a public matter but not to the exclusion of private decisions. He enquires into the relation between government language decisions and benefits to the public, i.e. to what extent government *ought to* be involved, and in what regards, in language problem-solving (268/9):

"Large time lags and uncertainty regarding benefits . . . motivate public, rather than private, decision-making. In order for many decisions on language use to be effective, they usually require considerable public (Governmental) encouragement [incentives]. Government decision-making is characterized by its societal inclusiveness, involving large time lags between *input and output, considerable numbers of people, etc.*" (cf. Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971:201/210. Further developed in Jernudd 1980.)

Language planning is definitionally tied to the structure of the polity — political process and public administering agencies at any level of group inclusiveness. Once we accept the possibility, desirability, or fact of language planning, a major

problem of planning (in language planning) in the author's opinion also becomes:

> "In any given situation, which type of planning agency, and which procedure, will serve the end of planning best?" (Faludi 1973:12)

For government to operate efficiently to meet goals of language correction is no easy matter, however democratic the polity and however agreed the policies. Some difficulties can be understood as problems in authority, says Saulson. He identifies at least three such problems, namely (a) the problem of consensus, (b) the problem of saliency and (c) the problem of awareness (1979:187). From a study of the Hebrew experience, Saulson derives some interesting hypotheses concerning requirements for successful implementation in language planning; for example, concerning awareness, that language managers have to be aware of public language needs and usage, that language users have to be made aware of agency services and products, and that language agencies must create a demand for their language products (188-190). He concludes that:

> ". . . effective functional authority, i.e. the ability to elicit voluntary compliance, is rooted in its appeal to utilitarianism. The language planning milieu has to assure the ordinary member of the language community that his internalizing a particular language product will be to his benefit." (193)

A fully developed language planning model would aim at an analytical understanding of *what policies are possible and under what conditions* (both historical and normative) and it would show *what designs, measures, instrumentalities and operations are available with what systemic effects*, in relation to policies.

While we begin to look into the "ought to" dimensions of language planning, it is important that the other dimensions — of what one can and will do, and in the most efficient manner — be explored and developed. Furthermore, language planning discussion has achieved considerable strengths in regard to policies that concern "whole languages" (the language determination problem) and will most likely refine its understanding here in the direction of appreciation of differentiation into styles and of language development phenomena (concerning e.g. words and terms) that flow from policies regarding "whole languages." But when we place language planning in a correction perspective, it would benefit by being broadened to include also language problems such as they are actually being attended to in "language cultivation" systems, in international term planning activities, in information processing, etc. We need to know more about why and when what language problems appear in speech communities of different types, and under what circumstances particular language problems justify planning. Developing

speech communities have not yet established routine links between language use and the communicative needs of modern technology, modern politics etc. Many language problems, therefore, may necessitate wider discussion and raise related issues of social and political organization as well. Language planning, thus, interacts with social, political, economic and other kinds of planning. Its unique task is to understand correction of language problems in its broader societal context.

Note

1. This paper has benefitted from comments by Richard Baldauf and M. Slaughter. It is based on my contributions to the discussion at the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, during the Second International Institute on Language Planning, 1980, and at the 10th World Congress of Sociology, Mexico City, 1982.

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