

Balancing Macro- and Micro-Sociolinguistic Perspectives in Language Management: The Case of Singapore

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The article shows how both macro- and micro-sociolinguistic perspectives are necessary to explain national language management. Macro-level language planning is motivated by tasks of national consolidation by the state, notably in Singapore's case tasks of socio-ethnic integration and economic development. Micro-level language management pertains to individuals' adjustments of language in discourse, including individual language acquisition and use in response to institutional and other changes brought about by the macro-level planning.

Following a policy of pragmatic multilingualism, the state in Singapore intervenes proactively in language communication to support non-linguistic goals. This is illustrated by the language policy in education and mass communication. Further, this macro-level language management is made within a constraint of reliance on external norms, thus removing the government from the complications of evaluating particular features of discourse. This distance allows the government to keep people's attention on the longer-term goals of implementing internationally adequate English and Chinese (Mandarin) norms. Meanwhile, exoglossic norms are promoted as the gate-keeping devices for individual social mobility, while massive individual variation is tolerated among speakers.

The two approaches to language management are complementary to each other. Since in Singapore relatively more has been done at the macro-level in language management, there is a need for linguists and sociolinguists, as well as language planners, to explore more micro-level issues, with a discursal and interactional emphasis. A balanced application of the two approaches will contribute to the creation and management of Singapore's language resources and, in the long run, serve both individual growth and the objectives of nation-building.

The Sociolinguistic Situation

Singapore's population of approximately three million is ethnically heterogeneous, with about 77% Chinese, 15% Malay, 6% of Indian origins, and 2% of other ethnic definitions. Its language situation is richly diversified. The 1980 census lists 20 specific "dialect groups" under the above four major ethnic category labels. It is however important to note that the reference to dialect of

a person in the Singapore context indicates basically the dialect group *origin* of a person, and does not necessarily reflect his or her linguistic competence. In other words, a person belonging (or assigned to belong) to a certain dialect group may or may not have acquired the said dialect as a mother tongue. Considering the complexity of the home language situation in Singapore (see Kuo 1985a), we expect that there will be further differentiation between the dialect group origin and mother tongue proficiency of a person in the future, a clear sign of language shift.

Historically, Hokkien, a southern Chinese dialect, used to serve as a language of local (and regional) commerce and trade along with the more important Bazaar Malay, which evolved to become the *lingua franca* for inter-ethnic communication.¹ At present, in part as a result of the bilingual educational policy, and in part due to the influence of the Speak Mandarin Campaign (both to be discussed below), an increasing proportion of Chinese, especially the young ones, also know and use Mandarin Chinese. The use of Mandarin has replaced the use of other Chinese dialects, Hokkien in particular, for intra-ethnic communication in some domains. Hokkien is known and still used, but mostly by older Chinese and the less educated. Mandarin is still by and large a High (H) language, while Hokkien remains dominant in hawker centers, on buses, etc.

Meanwhile, English is rapidly expanding its influence, supported by government endorsement and an explicit policy to establish it as the *de facto* working language in Singapore's formal-public, industrial and modern business sectors. Competitive with Mandarin Chinese, English is also replacing Bazaar Malay and Hokkien among those younger Singaporeans who acquire sufficient English as a result of schooling and the accelerating acceptance of a vernacular English unique to Singapore (labeled "Singlish"). The use of English is almost certain to expand and spread from formal to informal domains, although Mandarin will continue to attract a substantial proportion of the Chinese with its ethnic and "popular cultural" mass base.

Among members of the Indian community, about 64% are of Tamil origin, but only 54% report that they use Tamil as the principal family language (Kuo 1985a:28). Apparently, Tamil, although given an official status as the language which "represents" the Indian community, is not acquired as a mother tongue by many who fall within the ethnic classification of Indian. About 21% of the Indians use English as the dominant home language, while 15% use "others", including Hindi, Gujarati, Malayalam, and Punjabi.

Of the three major ethnic groups, Malays are the most homogeneous in religion, culture and language. The 1980 census shows that almost 98% of the Malays use

Malay as the dominant family language (Kuo 1985a:28). It is obvious that most of the Javanese and Boyanese who are classified under the Malay ethnic group label have accepted Malay as their home language.

Singapore's own traditions are recent and diverse. Each of the three major ethnic communities is characterized by its distinctive Great and Little traditions. Although a supra-ethnic, national identity is now deliberately being forged by the Singaporean government, and is spontaneously emerging as well under the realities of the modernizing city-state political economy, it is unlikely that there will be rapid cultural and linguistic assimilation among the heterogeneous population. Indeed, the "national culture" being forged is made distinct in its own right precisely by the bringing together of a "multiracial, multilingual" Singapore with English as an emerging common language. This is best expressed by the former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew when he commented on the success of the 1986 National Day Parade: "the compere spoke in English, and the whole National Stadium understood and responded as one. And the spectators sang together, when once they could not even laugh at the same jokes, never mind singing the same songs" (reported in *Straits Times* 18 August 1986).

Policy of Multilingualism

Given the multi-ethnic and multilingual nature of Singapore, two language-related issues are of fundamental significance and are closely related to the task of nation-building.

One is the question of communicative integration. Singaporean society has been able to sustain a high level of communicative integration through the evolution and adoption of several *lingua francas*, the practice of a multilingual policy, and through the presence of bilingual social brokers. It is through such multilingual mechanisms that a certain level of communicative integration has been maintained, so that individuals from diverse backgrounds can reach a working consensus for effective functioning of the system.

The other basic issue in Singapore is the government's desire to develop a new national identity which is additional to, and above and beyond, the identity and loyalty at the ethnic and sub-ethnic levels, one which serves the government's vision of economic, social and cultural development. The development of this Singaporean identity, for a population who speak different mother tongues and who come from divergent traditions, is the pressing question.

With historical experience and the need to sustain a working consensus, a language policy *has* taken shape that serves the government's goals. What

has evolved is a policy of "pragmatic multilingualism". It prescribes four official languages (Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil), to be treated equally.

Since it is next to impossible to prescribe total equality of use of the four in all public domains, a Singaporean political consensus allows a continuing adjustment of policy in a changing communicative environment.²

Of the four official languages, Malay is designated as the national language. This reflects the political history and geographical location of the island-state, as Singapore became an independent republic in 1965 after having been part of the Federation of Malaysia. The formal role of Malay is, however, mainly ceremonial. As already noted, the role of (Bazaar) Malay as a *lingua franca* has also declined, and with increasing use of English few non-Malays now acquire proficiency in Malay. This situation has in recent years caused some concern among government leaders and there is thus a renewed emphasis on Malay – apparently in response to the now openly discussed issues of the Malays as a minority group, and the sometimes strained relations with neighboring countries. Among other things, Malay is considered important as a regional language, and proficiency in Malay is believed to help build rapport with Indonesia and Malaysia. The pragmatic evolution of language policy is apparent here, as this renewed emphasis on the Malay language is consistent with its perceived instrumental value; notably absent is any reference to Malay, or to the learning of Malay, as a national language.

Mandarin Chinese, while not the mother tongue for the majority of the Chinese in Singapore, was chosen to represent the largest ethnic community, again due to historical and political considerations. A Speak Mandarin campaign was launched in 1979 and has continued with unabated force to promote the use of Mandarin in place of dialects among all Singaporean Chinese. In addition to the sentimental appeal as a language associated with Chinese culture and traditions, Mandarin is also promoted for its increasing importance as a trade language which facilitates access to the expanding market in China.

The policy selects Tamil to represent the Indian community, despite its relatively weak position in terms of use. At best, half of all individuals classified as Indians appear to use Tamil to any significant extent. Attempts have been made to promote it as a link language among Indians in Singapore, but with little effect. Thus, the position of Tamil as an official language has by and large been ignored, but tolerated, by the non-Tamil Indians. The official status of Tamil gives it (and therefore the Indian community) a position which parallels that of the other two ethnic languages and groups. Tamil's designation successfully serves to inform decisions on language selection in parallel contexts, such as in education and the media, and to confer certain language-related rights based on the principle of equality.

Of the four official languages, English is the only one which is not Asian in origin. It is hence regarded as "neutral" for intergroup relations in Singapore, if not so in terms of its external existence and use. As the language of colonial government,³ English has been retained as the administrative language in independent Singapore. Moreover, its perceived importance for, and actual use in, higher education, international trade, and modern industry and technology have strengthened over the years. Much of this spread here can be explained by the pragmatic implementation of the language policy. The government deems an expansion of the proficient use of English necessary for the continued growth of the economy. It is obvious that English is of instrumental value both from the societal perspective of economic growth, and from the individual perspectives of social mobility and economic gain (Kuo 1985b).

The use of English also serves to express the emerging supra-ethnic identity (which need not be exclusive of simultaneously held ethnic identity). The transition (or rather extension) from an ethnic identification to a national Singaporean one may take time, but the government appears confident that as long as economic development and political stability are sustained, it will emerge. The discourse for the new identity is now being created, notably through English-language songs, poetry, a nascent prose literature and speeches – marked mainly in content, but also marked linguistically by the use of words taken from the local vernaculars (including English) – and through vernacular English jokes and conversational routines.

Singapore presents a case of a small polity choosing not to defend its traditions, values, and integrative community-forming communications by excluding an "international language" from domestic use. Instead, it incorporates English, even to the extent of identifying future Singapore with it. Inter-translatability between English and the ethnic languages in Singapore therefore has not been raised as a potential problem. The other languages have their different functions in a multi-ethnic, multilingual polity. What does arise, however, is a tension between the matter-of-fact de-ethnicization of Singaporeans through English, in the direction of reforming a Singaporean identity, and the continuing tradition-bound appreciation of what in Singapore are referred to as Asian (as opposed to western) values⁴ expressed through their respective languages. A Singaporean polity is meant to be kept open and progressive through the use of English in education, entertainment, industry and commerce, at the same time as it is kept "culturally" on a course of communicating cherished Asian values, mainly through the use of ethnic languages.

Simpler models of language planning processes rely on divisions of labor between languages. In Singapore, we suggest that the language planning process has to take into account the possibility of the formation of a split discourse in the one language,

English. Singapore does not represent a case of the transition of a multilingual polity, by a one-language-one-polity ideological principle, to a unilingual English one – although English is being promoted as the common language of future Singapore; living in Singapore, individuals plan for a multilingual future. Nor does it fit into a model in which the planned support for English, “initially adopted for econotechnical functional purposes . . . results in integrative nationalism” and in which English is eventually “accorded full ethno-national symbolic value” (Fishman 1987:45). The exonormative fact⁵ alone may render a uniquely English outcome unlikely because only the content, not the language system, is available for symbolic vestment. Moreover, English is exoglossic and distinctively identified with non-Asian peoples – i.e., it embodies what’s “western” – unlike the other official languages which, in relation to English, are all “Asian”. The “mother tongue principle” which Fishman tentatively names as a theoretical engine in the transformation of the integrative language into nationalistic symbol explicitly applies to the other ethnic languages, not English. But English is used for the job of forming a Singaporean “culture” inclusive of desired Asian values.⁶

In Singapore’s official terminology, English is a “working language”, while the other ethnic languages are called “mother tongues”. Each “mother tongue” is used to re-ethnicize and consolidate separate ethnic communities. Interestingly, these languages are all also exonormative, especially for evaluation of their written varieties. Ethnic interests within Singapore, and the geopolitical context without, necessitate a balance of effort as well, and the future national planning process will depend, in the starkest outline, on the success of Singaporean political solidarity in steering competing ethnic interests on a mutually rewarding course.

In Singapore, general goals and guidelines of language-related policies are expressed in policy speeches by political leaders. There does not exist in Singapore a separate and permanent language planning agency to deal with language problems at the state level. In implementation, among all government bodies, the Ministry of Education is most directly and explicitly involved in language planning. Coordination of language planning efforts is apparently made easier as the policy of pragmatic multilingualism provides room for flexibility and allows constant adjustments of implementation rules prompted by changing circumstances.

Language Planning in Education

The pronounced ideology of meritocracy in Singapore dictates that the individual’s rewards *after* school are closely linked to success in school. The planning, implementation and use of languages in school therefore interact with the

planning, implementation and use of languages before (with parents) and after schooling (in career development). However, it is in the educational system that the government’s role in language planning is most clearly manifested.

Before independence in 1965, four more or less independent school systems had evolved in Singapore, each with a different language as the major medium of instruction. The Ministry of Education in the new republic has consolidated the schools of different language streams into a national system in which all follow standard curricula. Textbooks are now locally produced, and teachers locally trained. English is now the medium in all classes except when special considerations warrant use of one of the other official languages. A slow but consistent shift took place here in the past few decades: Statistics show that in 1959, 47% of children entered English primary schools; by 1979, the figure had risen to 91%, and by 1983, to more than 99%. All Primary One students were in the unified national system using English as the first language from 1987 (Soon 1988:7,21).

Under a policy of bilingual education, all students in Singapore are required to take lessons in English (the first language) and one of the other official languages (the second language). The bilingual curriculum begins from Primary One (or even pre-Primary classes in some schools). The pupil is expected to select as the second language of study the language associated with the student’s ethnic classification, although there are cases of Malay and Indian pupils taking Chinese as the second language.

Minimum language requirements form a basis of admission to secondary schools, pre-university colleges, and tertiary institutions. For entry to the university, however, a pass in a second language is no longer required since the government is now placing more emphasis on content subjects and therefore also on English. Students who are admitted and who fall short in second language grades are required to attend an intensive second language “camp”. The relaxation of the second language requirement favors English and those competent in it, since English is the exclusive language in university education.

The implementation of the societal multilingual policy, with English as a common working language, is actively carried out by the educational system through the streaming structure of the entire school system, the maneuvering of language curriculum design, gate-keeping by examination requirements, and by extra-curricular activities.

Given the exoglossic norms of the official languages, the Singaporean language teacher and user have to exert a distinct effort to gain access and keep up with production norms and standards that have their creative sources outside of Singapore. This is especially so for language specialists who require detailed and

precise information on evolving norms and evaluative standards. It is recognized that since the Republic is so small and pursues a radically open economic policy, it is not feasible for it to establish and maintain its own unique norms for any of the official languages. As a general principle, the school system in Singapore adopts the norms that are recognized at international centers of language development and management.⁸

For English, Singapore follows a British norm, represented locally by the British Council⁹ but upheld through a variety of personal and institutional links, in and out of the world of education. However, with the increasing success of the bilingual education policy, it is not surprising that vernacular English is emerging. For an increasing number of young and middle-aged Singaporeans, peers accept and even expect use of vernacular English in the in-group. Peer usage incorporates and thus legitimates deviations from the school (and "official") norm, especially as such usage is neither limited to the very young nor to informal or intimate communication. A vernacular norm may be in the process of being formed, although it is as yet vague and highly variable.

The school system inevitably finds itself under pressure to cope in practical pedagogical terms with this kind of peer-group English used "among themselves" by pupils. The conscious observation of emerging Singaporean ways of speaking English has already led to debates as to whether a unique and indigenous norm of English different from the school norm should be legitimated by Singaporean institutions. For example, in the academic community, specialists have applied the label "standard Singaporean English" to refer to aspects of uniquely Singaporean ways of speaking English. Understandably, such views have had a mixed reception, especially by educational authorities. Still another source of "pollution" comes from the influence of American English, both in spelling and pronunciation, which comes as part of "media imperialism". There are signs that such influence is becoming more and more difficult to resist – as evidenced by the increasing numbers of "errors" (*color* instead of *colour*, *center* instead of *centre* and so on).

Language Planning in the Media

The policy of multilingualism is reflected and, indeed, enforced in the mass communications networks in Singapore. Contents in all four official languages are available in the press, radio, television, and movies. The total communication network is designed to carry messages in as many languages as economically feasible in order to reach and to mobilize the linguistically diversified population.

Two observations can be made from audience analysis (Kuo 1978). First, the media situation attests to the dominant position of English. Communication messages in English are the only ones that do not carry an internally differentiating ethnic-traditional flavor and can thus be potentially constitutive of a supra-ethnic discourse. Second, media contents in ethnic languages draw audiences almost exclusively from the Chinese, Malay, and Indian communities (although Chinese TV serial dramas seem to attract quite a few non-Chinese viewers due to their inherent interest as the only locally produced serials). People generally show sentimental attachment to media contents in their own ethnic languages. Some of the media at times also champion the causes of the language and cultural community that they represent.

In the domain of mass media, significantly, Chinese is the dominant language among the young and the old. Much to the surprise of many observers, the Chinese language press has continued to increase in readership in recent years. In 1987, out of a claimed 1.1 million people literate in Chinese, 980,000 read at least one Chinese newspaper, while, as a contrast, of 1.2 million literate in English, 845,000 (610,000 of them Chinese) read an English newspaper (*Lianhe Zaobao* 6 October 1987).

Mandarin TV programs are popular. As an illustration of the contrast between the popularity of English and Mandarin TV programs, the former Prime Minister, in his speech to mark the 25th anniversary of TV in Singapore, provided the following figures: On an average day, of the two million Singaporeans aged 15 and above, only 14% watch SBC's English news, while 33% watch the Mandarin news, and 9% the Malay language news (*Straits Times* 30 April 1988). For several years, the top ten most popular TV programs have consistently been those in Mandarin, and even the tenth most popular Mandarin program enjoys a viewership 50% higher than the most popular English program. Mandarin enjoys a mass base which in an important way helps to maintain it as a language of middle-class Chinese in Singapore.

SBC Radio broadcasts separate language channels, with the proportion of transmission time ranging from 28% for Chinese (Mandarin only) to 22% for Tamil (SBC 1987:45). The relatively equal allocation of hours over SBC radio is obviously not based on the relative proportion of population nor on the audience size in each channel, since Tamil programs attract less than 5% of the total radio audience. The rationale lies more with the policy of multilingualism and the fact that a minimum number of transmission hours is necessary to serve the audience from a given language community, no matter how small.

The language distribution in television broadcasting is different. Although programs on all four official languages are available on all the three SBC channels,

English and Mandarin programs take up more than 80% of TV broadcast hours.¹⁰ This uneven distribution is, in part, due to high TV production costs. For entertainment programs, production is highly dependent on the support of advertisers, and their support, in turn, is almost totally based on the consideration of viewership ratings. On this basis, SBC cannot produce the same proportion of programs in Tamil as in English or Mandarin.

The language offerings by SBC Television are actually more extensive because of the subtitling service. As a principle, non-English language programs are supplied with English subtitles (another indication of English as a supra-ethnic language), and English language programs are often provided with Chinese or Malay subtitles, in part to compensate for the shortage of programs in the Malay language. Channel 8 is reserved for programs in Mandarin and Tamil, Channel 5 for those in English and Malay, and Channel 12, mostly English. Such a pattern of language-by-channel is in a way "officially" confirmed by Singapore Armed Forces mobilization announcements which are made according to the arrangement.

Mandarin and the Speak Mandarin Campaign

Since 1979, the government has been implementing a campaign to convert speakers of all other Chinese dialects to speakers of Mandarin Chinese, as the language of Chinese ethnicity and traditions. The campaign is also conducted in coordination with the moral education of the youth, to counter what is felt to be an erosion due to "western" influences on the Chinese traditional value system (often expressed in terms of Confucian ethics). In recent years, to the motivation of forging cultural roots has been added that of fostering "better economic and political ties with China" (*Straits Times* 25 February 1988).

A Speak Mandarin Campaign Secretariat, under the Ministry of Information and the Arts (formerly the Ministry of Communications and Information), coordinates the campaign in close cooperation with other government agencies (particularly the Ministry of Education), the media, community associations and interest groups (especially those of Chinese origin). Since 1979, an annual month of intensively focussed campaigning gives continuous visibility to Mandarin, as do the posters and stickers displayed in public places and taxicabs.

The Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) is no doubt among the most important institutions in the success of the campaign (see Kuo 1984a). SBC ceased television broadcast of Chinese dialect programs and commercials at the beginning of the campaign. Popular TV drama serials from Hong Kong, Japan,

France and even Brazil have been dubbed into Mandarin. These serials have consistently enjoyed a larger viewership than that for English and other language programs.

The campaign is an apparent success. According to a Ministry of Education survey, 68% of all new entrants into primary school in 1987 came from homes in which parents now use Mandarin with their children, compared with only 25.9% in 1980 (*Straits Times* 9 October 1987). A 1987 survey by the Ministry of Communications and Information revealed that 87% of the Chinese now speak Mandarin, as compared to 82% in 1985 (*Straits Times* 12 October 1987).

The campaign involves corpus planning in the drive to promote use of Mandarin names for local food items and in the pinyinization¹¹, on the basis of Mandarin, of district, building (shopping center), and street names, and of personal names, hitherto (when written in Roman script) rendered on the basis of dialects' pronunciation.¹²

The food name problem was partly solved by a conscious effort to codify into Mandarin Chinese uniquely Singaporean names, based on an adjustment of existing dialect or Malay names. The campaign secretariat compiled (at times codified) a list of names of items commonly used in hawker centers, markets, restaurants and also at Hungry Ghost Festival auctions in pinyinized forms following Mandarin pronunciation. Many of these items are of purely local origin with no Mandarin lexical precedent. Such newly codified items in Mandarin represent an original contribution from Singapore to the corpus of the Mandarin lexicon. But old habits die hard and, for effective communication, many hawkers and their customers simply do not use the Mandarinized names. There is little in their immediate communicative environment that gives them reason to do so.

The pinyinization of personal names has been systematically applied in schools but not in other domains. The fact that schools are obliged to register Chinese pupils in the Mandarin-equivalent form of their names propagates the Mandarin version. However, this version is not generally used at home and among peers, and this resistance to general use of the Mandarin form poses a problem which has not yet been resolved. In the case of place names, in recent years, in response to community demand to retain some traditional names which have dialect origins (for reasons of easy reference and undoubtedly also ingrained sentiment), dialect forms were selectively reintroduced, in their traditional Roman script.

As a principle, the educational authorities and the mass media accept as the standard the Chinese norm of China. The Mandarin norm originating from Taiwan differs in some respects from that of China and poses an alternative to it. The simplified characters are not used in Taiwan, for example. The availability to Sin-

gaporean users of Chinese of two norms, both external, is strikingly parallel to the availability to Singaporean users of English of two norms, British and American. The differences between the Beijing putonghua and Taiwan Mandarin norms is not perceived as posing a problem for students, although there is some concern over the overall standard of the written Chinese of younger people. In view of this general concern, it is surprising that little attention has been given to the fact that Mandarin Chinese as it develops in Singapore in differentiating into a spoken vernacular based in peer networks and informal domains, on the one hand, and a public norm, on the other hand, propagated by the mass media and the schools.¹³ The parallel phenomenon for English is being given considerable attention. In terms of language distance between Chinese varieties in individual repertoires, however, the trend is one of convergence between varieties. Formerly there were more linguistically distant varieties spoken because of the influence of Chinese dialects. Mandarin in Singapore today, in all domains, is generally closer to the "official" standard than that in the past.

Language Management in Singapore: A Theoretical Commentary

In a state-of-the-art paper, Fishman (1987:409) refers to two definitions of language planning. One points "in societal directions" and deals with the "authoritative allocation of resources to the attainment of language status and language corpus goals". The other one, "reiterated by [Neustupný and Jernudd]", is "more linguistically oriented". He feels it would be "instructive to determine whether the distinctions between the two models are really *etic* or *emic*" (Fishman 1987:410).

We suggest that the former (the "societal" approach) is indicative of a macrosociological perspective on language management whereby the acts of management are also mainly macrolinguistic. They constitute highly organized systemic correction of an entire language (Neustupný 1978:255) for both actual and potential users of the language in a national society. The societal perspective also favors study of the kind of language ideology (or at least idiom, cf. Neustupný 1978:252) that is held by language managers involved in institutions charged with language planning, typically at a national level, formative of a nation-state. This is an ideology of planning through which the language managers reach for some ideal in the future (Jernudd 1982:2).

The latter (the "linguistic" approach) is indicative of a microlinguistic perspective on language management whereby the acts of management are microlinguistic in that they constitute correction of inadequacies that are noted by individuals in their own discourses (e.g., Jernudd and Neustupný 1987:75-76).

Because it explores the link between individual conduct in discourse and group behavior in communication, this perspective is also microsociologically oriented.¹⁴

The two perspectives are thus not exclusive of each other, neither in theory nor in reference to any concrete case of language management. In cooperation with the macrosociological concern and methods, the microsociological perspective leads to research that identifies the demand for intervention in language in discourse. It also asks for research on the consequences of authoritatively imposed action, and reaction, not just in the generation of discourse but also in the evaluation of its inadequacies. It provides an apparatus to explore the details of noting, evaluating, and correcting consequential communication problems in policy and planning action.¹⁵

The complementarity of the two perspectives can best be illustrated by the case of language management in Singapore.

The historical circumstances place Singapore at the point of socio-ethnic consolidation and incorporation of varieties of languages into a uniform system of communication which can be centrally managed and coordinated in the pursuit of defined national goals. The polity relies on a forward-looking and anticipatory model of noting, and acting on, problems and opportunities, be they economic, cultural or linguistic. The Singaporean reality thus favors application by analysts of a macrosociological perspective on language management, specifically informed by planning theory (Jernudd 1982).

In practice, analysts generally assume that, in Singapore, belief in planning as a guiding ideology makes the government intervene in domains of language communication in a proactive fashion. Language is one of the domains of intervention in which the government has chosen to act. Analysis from the point of view of planning does not require that language problems have already occurred in discourse to create a demand for language management by planning. Still, evaluation of current communicative state of affairs may well play an important role in the government's planning action. (As a contrast, the microlinguistic discourse-based perspective generally does not deal well with language problems that may only occur in the future, including problems that may occur precisely because of proactive language management.)

Singaporean planners give priority to the political tasks of forming a nation and developing its economy. They create language planning reality and, concomitantly, a planning discourse, and the two interact. However, there is a reality of communicative life in Singapore which the micro-level demand-based perspective can reveal in discourse, but not a macro-level planning perspective. This other

reality may be found, for example, in the day-to-day management of newspaper language, in teachers' management of language pedagogy in the classroom, in the editing of texts, in dictionary compilation, in production of "good language" manuals, and in within-office term management, etc. These aspects of the micro-sociolinguistic communicative life of Singapore are not salient at present and are not seen to belong together in the social political discourse of the country. The one possible exception is the set of reactions to the presence of home-grown spoken varieties of English.

Some of the reactions to spoken English in Singapore can be understood from the point of view of macro-level planning, namely, reinforcement of the presence of the exoglossic norm in the channels through which English is provided, accompanied by reinforcement of evaluative devices at gates to individuals' social mobility. Even labeling of the set of spoken varieties as "Standard Singaporean" can be understood in the context of planning. Some people thus seek to replace the exoglossic norm because a foreign source for the norm threatens authentication of an English norm for Singapore once speech is beginning to become authentically home-grown. In consequence, evaluation of variation in English usage would come into focus.

Variationist ideology and its application to linguistic study are compatible with the use of a micro-level discourse management perspective. A micro-sociolinguistic perspective based on the management of discourse in relation to individual acquisition and use of language in Singapore may well be gaining ground (cf. Gupta 1986; Harrison and Lim 1988; Loh and Harrison 1988). There is a lack of concern with Singaporean indigenization of spoken Mandarin Chinese,¹⁶ a linguistic process now under way. And there is a concern instead with standards in written Chinese, the simplification of characters, and the regularization and uniformity of personal names and public-place names. These are typical of societies characterized by the planning paradigm (and developmental phase) of language management (cf. Neustupný 1978:181 on Japan), and are now referred to as the macro-sociolinguistic perspective of language management.

The application of exoglossic norms for the official languages minimizes attention to development matters in language planning in Singapore. Although it is an issue whether individuals live up to the norms in usage, there is no simultaneous process of creation of norms (as systemic macrolinguistic correction) and therefore no need for monitoring of alternative sources of norms, nor for creation of evaluative principles. This shortcut may in fact suppress public attention and encouragement to individuals who might opt for training and careers in language management. As a result, in the future, the society may find wanting in such

required skills if and when there is a transition from a planning to a demand-in-discourse management system in Singapore as a result of successful modernization and consolidation of the city-state.

It is among the young people in Singapore that the language policies are having a decisive effect, and it is also among this younger generation that the vernaculars emerge. The older generation knows what it wants but does not necessarily modify its own language behavior, at least not to the same extent as among the younger generations. This is a process whereby a "politicized" point of view in the early period of formation of the polity is succeeded by a matter-of-fact acceptance of the realities of usage norms and institutional solutions. According to Fishman, the former is "best represented by an older generation of users", while the latter is "best approximated by a younger generation of users" (1977:212). Also, with the success of consolidation of the polity and modernization of the economy, there will be a time when variation is seen as (merely) individual or as deviations which, if found inadequate, can be corrected without upsetting existing institutions and communicative order (see Pendley 1983:53).

At the very same time, however, Singaporean language management practice has allowed a gap to develop between systematic macro-level implementation of language norms and micro-level observation and evaluation of language use. In pursuing the former, problems of communication at the interactional micro-sociolinguistic level might have been overlooked. At the same time, individual difficulties in accommodating to the linguistic policies may not have been given due attention they deserve. The macro-sociolinguistic perspective fits an earlier period of Singapore's development when there are larger issues at stake. In the meantime, the micro-sociolinguistic perspective will become increasingly relevant in the future as Singapore matures.

Conclusion

In multilingual Singapore, language diversity has been seen as an obstacle to nation-building, and hence "problematic" for several reasons. Firstly, linguistic identity is associated with ethnic and cultural identity. Language loyalty could thus lead to inter-ethnic conflict when the functional status or sentimental values of one's own ethnic language are at stake. Language has therefore long been a sensitive political issue in the short history of Singapore. Secondly, language diversity weakens communicative integration and generally implies inefficiency in the management of economy and polity. This is thought to hinder the social, economic and political development of the nation.

In response to such perceived problems, a pragmatic approach to multilingualism has developed over the years. Pragmatism in language policy and language management has allowed for flexible responses to changing social, economic and political conditions. The underlying consideration has consistently been that language policy (and hence language management at the national level) must serve the needs of nation-building. As a result of clever, and politically rational and rationalized, language management, accompanied by political stability and economic prosperity since independence, the language issue in Singapore has undergone a process of depoliticization. Indeed, the fact that the language can now be presented as a topic of rational public discussion is itself testimony to the maturity of Singapore's nationhood.

In accordance with a pragmatic approach, decisions on language policy, adjustment measures and their implementation are made in cabinet, parliament and relevant ministries. The rationale of major policy decisions is articulated by political leaders, while the consequences for the implementation of such decisions are usually articulated at the ministerial or lower levels. Consultation with specialists is done on a confidential, *ad hoc* and piecemeal basis. The extent of their input to policy deliberations and evaluation of language-related problems cannot however be determined. Language planning in Singapore represents a case of centralized planning without a central language planning agency, unlike many other multilingual countries.

This pattern is functional and fully understandable given the strong emphasis on planning as a component in Singapore's overall development strategies. Indeed, there is probably no other alternative since in Singapore language planning at the national level is subsumed as an integral part of national development planning, serving the need of nation-building, and closely interconnected with other planning activities. The connections between these different and interrelated dimensions of development planning (i.e., in language, education, and mass media) are best demonstrated by the case of the Speak Mandarin Campaign.

Centralized planning generally implies a top-down approach in decision making and implementation. Under the circumstances, the focus of language management tends to be on the implementation of (superimposed) norms at the macro-sociolinguistic, institutional level, while relatively insensitive to communicative problems in language use or the emergence of indigenous language norms at the micro-sociolinguistic, interactional level. In Singapore, the longer-term success of English and Mandarin promotion requires management of their internal linguistic diversification into High and Low varieties, and into usages that rely on developing indigenous norms. It is clear from this brief review that while the policy

objectives are being met, efficiency improvements are still possible at the adjustment and implementation stages in the creation and management of Singapore's language resources. This calls for attention to and investigation of language management at the micro-sociolinguistic level.

We are of the view that the two approaches to language management, the macro-sociolinguistic and the micro-sociolinguistic, are complementary to each other. Since relatively more has been done at the macro level, with an institutional emphasis, the time has come for linguists and sociolinguists to explore more micro-level issues, with a discursal and interactional emphasis. Languages, after all, are major resources in the society, and wise management of such resources will invariably serve both individual growth and the objectives of nation-building, however defined.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das Gleichgewicht zwischen der makro- und der mikrosoziolinguistischen Perspektive in der Sprachplanung am Beispiel Singapurs

Der Artikel zeigt, daß zur Erklärung der nationalen Sprachplanung sowohl die makro- als auch die mikrosoziolinguistische Perspektive erforderlich ist. Sprachplanung auf der Makroebene ergibt sich aus der Zielsetzung der Konsolidierung des Staates, im Falle Singapurs insbesondere den Zielen der ethnisch-sozialen Integration und der Wirtschaftsentwicklung. Sprachplanung auf der Mikroebene äußert sich in der Anpassung der Interaktionssprache der Menschen einschließlich des individuellen Spracherwerbs und der Sprachverwendung in der Folge von Veränderungen, die bei Behörden und anderen Institutionen durch die Sprachplanung auf der Makroebene hervorgerufen werden.

In Singapur verfolgt der Staat eine Politik der pragmatischen Sprachenvielfalt und greift zur Erreichung außersprachlicher Ziele präventiv in die sprachliche Kommunikation ein. Die Sprachenpolitik in Bildungswesen und Massenkommunikation macht dies deutlich. Diese Makrosprachplanung geht zudem mit einer Unterstützung externer Normen einher, wodurch die Regierung die Schwierigkeiten der Beurteilung bestimmter Merkmale der sprachlichen Interaktion vermeidet. Diese Vermeidungstaktik erlaubt es der Regierung, die Aufmerksamkeit der Bürger auf das langfristige Ziel der Verwendung international gangbarer Normen für Englisch und Chinesisch (Mandarin) zu lenken. Gleichzeitig werden dialektübergreifende Normen als

Mittel zur sozialen Mobilität gefördert, während die Sprachgemeinschaften individueller Varianz gegenüber sehr tolerant sind.

Die beiden Sprachplanungsansätze ergänzen einander. Da die Sprachplanung in Singapur auf der Makroebene weiter entwickelt ist, besteht Bedarf an Linguisten und Soziolinguisten sowie auch an Sprachplanern zur Erforschung der Probleme der Mikroebene, insbesondere der sprachlichen Interaktion. Eine ausgewogene Kombination beider Ansätze kann zur Schaffung und Planung der sprachlichen Instrumente Singapurs beitragen. Sie wird langfristig sowohl dem individuellen Fortkommen wie auch den Zielen der Nationalstaatsbildung dienen.

RESUMO

Teni ekvilibron inter makro- kaj mikro-socilingvistikaj perspektivoj en lingvomastrumado: la kazo de Singapuro

La artikolo montras kiel kaj makro- kaj mikro-socilingvistikaj perspektivoj estas necesaj por klarigi nacian lingvan mastrumadon. Makro-nivela lingvoplanado estas motivata de taskoj de nacia solidarigo fare de la ŝtato, notinde en la kazo de Singapuro taskoj de societna integriĝo kaj ekonomia evoluigo. Mikro-nivela lingva mastrumado rilatas al la alĝustigo fare de la individuo de ties diskursa lingvaĵo, inkluzive individuan lingvoakiron kaj utiligon responde al instituciaj kaj aliaj ŝanĝoj, kiuj fontas el la makronivela planado.

Sekvante politikon de pragmata multlingvismo, en Singapuro la ŝtato intervenas anticipe en lingva komunikado por subteni nelingvajn celojn. Tion ilustras la lingva politiko en klerigo kaj amaskomunikado. Krome, tiu makronivela lingva mastrumado okazas ene de apogo al eksteraj normoj, tiel fortentante la registaron por de la komplikaj taskoj de difinitaj aspektoj de diskurso. Tiu distanco ebligas la registaron teni la atenton de la publiko je la longperspektiva celo apliki internacie adekvatajn normojn anglalingvaj kaj ĉinlingvaj. Dume, oni disvastigas eksterdialektajn normojn kiel gardostarajn ilojn por individua socia moveblo, dum grandega individua variado estas tolerata inter parolantoj.

La du aliroj al lingva mastrumo komplementas unu la alian. Pro tio, ke, en Singapuro, oni pli multe progresis ĉe la makronivelo en lingva mastrumado, oni bezonas pli multajn lingvistojn kaj socilingvistojn, kaj ankaŭ lingvoplanantojn, por esplori pli mikronivelajn demandojn, kun emfazo je diskurso kaj interagado. Ekvilibra apliko de la du aliroj kontribuos al kreado kaj mastrumado de la lingvaj rimedoj de Singapuro, kaj, longperspektive, helpas kaj individuan kreskon kaj la celojn de naciokonstruado.

NOTES

1. For an early discussion on the sociolinguistic profile of Singapore, see Kuo (1976).
2. For a discussion on the ideology of pragmatism in Singapore, see Chua (1985).
3. English is also an important language for in-group communications as well among Singaporeans who were active in the independent movement. Cf. Mazrui (1975) on the equivalent use of English among leaders who achieved independence in Africa.
4. Some of both these "Asian" and "western" values may in fact be universal or typical of traditional social formations. It may be important to establish the extent to which there are such communalities of value.

5. We are referring to the public, overt management of the English norm for broadcasting, schools, public speaking etc. in Singapore, as expressed by its management idiom, ideology and theory. Such norm however is not necessarily followed in, for instance, the evaluation or implementation in correction in schools. (See, for examples, Gupta 1986.)

6. It then also becomes an issue in Singaporean language management to define the roles of the other official languages in regard to the transmission and formation of values, relative to English. The issue is reflected in discussion of the "cultural ballast" of the "mother-tongues".

7. Private publishing of dictionaries, manuals etc. should not be neglected in any study that attempts complete coverage of language management in Singapore, nor should the internal editing processes, for the purpose of achieving "correct" language (in Chinese, English etc.), in publishing houses, the newspapers, and in the media.

8. For the Malay language, the Majlis Bahasa Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia is the joint planning body to coordinate language development and management. Singapore has observer status and generally accepts the decisions of the council. Singapore is represented through its Jawatankuasa Bahasa Melayu Singapura (Malay Language Committee), set up in 1981 by the then Ministry of Communications and Information. Norm changes for Tamil have been under the influence of the Tamil language centres in Madras and Sri Lanka. Adjustments have been more informal, less systematic, and taken longer to implement than for Malay or Chinese. Notably, the Ministry of Education introduced thirteen new Tamil letters in 1983, following up on reform in Indian Tamilnadu.

9. Other foreign language interests are looked after by, among others, Alliance Française, the German Embassy and the Goethe Society. There are many private language schools.

10. No official statistics on the distribution of the four official languages in SBC's three channels are available at present. A 1979 source reveals that the distribution was: English 62.7%, Chinese 23.6%, Malay 7.5% and Tamil 6.2% (Kuo 1984b:54).

11. Pinyin, the new system of Romanized phonetic transcription developed and used in China, was already adopted in the early 1970s to replace the older system based on the Chinese Phonetic Characters (Zhuyin Fuhao). The new system is taught in schools and used in official documents and mass media. It has been applied to facilitate the Speak Mandarin Campaign.

12. A committee appointed by the then Ministry of Culture in 1976 was put in charge of the standardization of translated terminology in Chinese. The committee has published several lists of proposed standard Chinese translations of geographical names, names of international and national organizations, titles of civil servants, etc.

13. This same point is made by Noss (1984:164).

14. It is relevant that the study of repair is indeed a topic of interest in the field of ethnomethodology with its close relationship to (micro)sociological study.

15. We agree with Fishman (1987:420) that macrosociological theory in language management is weak. Also, microsociological theory needs to be incorporated in language management study.

16. With some notable exceptions, represented by Chen's several articles (1983, 1984, 1986a, 1986b).

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