How Do Researchers on Language Policy Perceive Language? - From the Language Planning / Language Attitude Dichotomy to Language Management Theory[1)]

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Abstract

The study of language policy has developed as a field of inquiry which investigates intentional interventions in language. But the dualistic distinction of 'language policy' and 'language attitude' has often lead researchers to overlook the importance of omnipresent micro-level interventions in language. After having confirmed the arbitrariness of this dichotomy, this paper presents as a possible alternative the theory of 'language management', which provides a more comprehensive framework. The examination of the main ideas of 'language management' theory suggests that the difference between the two paradigms of conventional language policy and language management is not merely a matter of approach or focus but rooted in different conceptions of language.

1.   Introduction

The study of language policy has developed as a field of enquiry that investigates intentional intervention in language, and has to date produced numerous case studies in response to policy issues addressed by governments and various movements throughout the world. However, is it sufficient for studies of language policy to simply analyze phenomena that manifest as 'language policy'? Is 'language policy' such a self-evident subject? By shedding light on different conceptions of language within the study of language policy, this paper aims to challenge the simple understanding that the apparent existence of language policy justifies the study of it on its own. This paper argues that the study of language policy has often misread the subject of its own research in arbitrarily extracting for analysis certain aspects out of the whole of human language activities. [2]

Firstly, I will point out the shortcomings of the dualistic conception of language seen amidst conventional studies of language policy, and will then look at the theory of language management which seems to overcome the limitations of the former approach.

While studies of language policy to date have frequently considered the conceptions of language held by both the language policy decision makers and recipients, it seems that few language planning researchers have focused the enquiry on their own conception of language. Amongst them, one can point to the discussions of Kasuya (1999) and Yamada (1999). The former, which questions the 'epistemological naturalism' — a conception of language that sees language policy as a specific (artificial) activity distinct from usual 'natural' language activities —, shares this paper's aim, namely the attempt to broaden the framework of the study of language policy. [3] But it does not consider the theory of language management. On the other hand, the keynote of the latter was in examining the theory of language management from an ethnomethodological perspective, and stopped short at introducing its differences with other approaches to language policy[4]. This paper attempts to go further to elucidate the difference in the conceptions of language that lie behind both the current studies of language policy and the language management theory.

2. The dualistic understanding of language activities within the study of language policy

Reflecting on the evolution of the study of language policy, it can be said that the scope of research has broadened from state-centred language policy to include various organisations, and even also as far as language planning carried out by specific individuals. Kaplan and Baldauf give the following overview of language policy research:

> Much of what has been learned about the practice of language policy and language planning in the last two or three decades has applied to the large-scale situation – to the macro-structural environment – at the national and supernational levels. In the last few years, that knowledge has been applied in micro-structural environments – individual cities, in particular sectors of economic or social activity, etc. There is an increasing interest in the functions and purposes of language planning in limited organizations. (Kaplan/Baldauf 1997:117)

Thus, it is no longer regarded sufficient to think solely of the state (or local) government as the agent of language policy and planning. However, as the author pointed out elsewhere (Kimura 2001), studies of language policy are still usually characterised by extracting language policy as special actions out of the whole of language activities. On the other hand, quotidian language activities are researched within the different framework of 'language attitudes.' The result of such a dichotomous approach is the creation of a discourse as if two categories of language activities exist. Let us look at the example of one representative language policy researcher. In the introductory remarks to a special issue of a sociolinguistic journal entitled *'Language Planning and Attitude,'* Coulmas comments on two types of language changes:

> Some [language] changes originate in deliberate efforts by interest groups or governments, thus yielding the results of language planning. Others are consequences of attitudes toward a language or linguistic variety which emanate from changing social and political conditions. (Coulmas 1988:5)

Here we have a commonsense sociolinguistic view which differentiates language planning from language attitude. Another sociolinguist Calvet also divides language activities into the two categories of 'in vivo' and 'in vitro' (Calvet, 1996). The former is the practise of quotidian language activities while the latter is explained as intervention into such practise. Although different in terminology, introducing a dichotomy into the analysis of language activities is nothing novel to sociolinguistics, and in effect only echoes the traditional categories of 'language attitude' and 'language policy'.

Such a dualistic understanding of language activities is frequently linked to the distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial': When it is deemed that language should not be left, so to speak, to a 'natural' language attitude, language planning is carried out 'artificially'. Such a conception of language is accurately expressed by the following definition of language policy:

'Language policy' is action taken consciously by the state, political parties, pressure groups or the press, etc to change the *natural evolutionary process* of language.' (Neustupný, 1996: 425; emphasis by the present author)

This image of an 'artificial' intervention into a 'natural' process — which is frequently found in language policy literature — at first glance appears to present a valid understanding from which to analyse language policy. However, such categorisation is problematic as a means to determine a research subject. To illustrate this, let us consider research on minority languages which is the author's area of primary involvement.

When dealing with minority language currents, the contrast of 'natural' and 'artificial' is often expressed as 'natural assimilation' and 'artificial language maintenance' (Kimura, 2001). To look at an evident example, a recent linguistics textbook dealing also with language policy presents students with the following task:

Should endangered languages be protected or left to nature? Make groups and debate (Iino, et al, 2003:133).

Here there is no further definition; 'protection' (read 'artificial intervention') is contrasted with 'nature,' the implicit assumption being that it is natural for small languages to become extinct. The various policies and social pressures that bring about assimilation are mysteriously juxtaposed with 'nature,' and are pre-excluded from 'artificiality.' The following counterargument to such rhetoric rejects the assumption to regard only the maintenance of minority languages as 'artificial':

Professor Davies insists that he does not want to kill off the language. He merely wants it to be allowed to die a natural death. The implication is that, without all the "artificial" support poured into saving Welsh it would simply curl up and die of old age.

This distinction, it seems to me, is entirely spurious.

The forces that have been eroding Welsh for the best part of 200 years are at least as man-made and as artificial as the measures that have more recently been breathing a new life into it. (Basini, 1997: 11)

This extract points out that the distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial' so often seen in relation to minority languages is extremely arbitrary. The simplistic dichotomy criticised here is based on a naïve position towards language hegemony which brings about assimilation. While naturalising the agency of a stronger force as unmarked, the agency of a comparatively weaker force is treated as marked and is identified as 'artificial'. Fishman puts the central question in a nutshell when he asks: 'Isn't 'natural' merely used to disguise a power play and to discourage resistance to it?' (Fishman 2001: 454)

The next question is whether this arbitrariness is unique to the instance of minority languages, or rather symptomatic of a deeper rooted general issue. At first glance the problem appears to result from only regarding agencies to maintain minority languages to be 'artificial,' and hence if agencies intent on assimilation were likewise included to the 'artificial' side, the problem of the arbitrary distinction would be rectified forthwith. However, if we transect 'artificiality' in this manner and focus attention on the remaining 'natural current,' would it produce a passive 'language attitude' of a different kind of language activity to that of active language policy? Presumably not. If we look closer, innumerable language policy activities from various groups and individuals will become

visible within the 'natural current'[5]. In short, it is essentially impossible to objectively categorize language changes that result from human language activities into either 'natural' (attitude dependant) or 'artificial' (policy dependant) transitions. So we can comprehend that the arbitrary dichotomy in relation to minority language currents seen above is just an evident case resulting from the fundamental arbitrariness of the dichotomy of language activities.

Herein is concealed a problem that cannot simply be dismissed. It has been repeatedly pointed out that people will without exception resist overt language policy by governments and other organisations (see e.g. Coulmas, 1985:85). This resistance is not surprising when language policy is conceived as a kind of artificial alteration to natural currents, thereby ignoring language user's thoughts and intentions related to interests and power relations within 'natural currents.'

For the study of language policy to be able to offer valid analysis and proposals in the face of reality, the crucial concern must not only be with something perceived as 'language policy' by the researcher, but also with the so often ignored 'natural current.' The theory of language management presented in the following can be regarded an attempt to put the concept of language policy within a broader framework, in order to overcome these shortcomings.

3. Theory of language management

The theory of language management advanced by Neustupný and Jernudd originate from doubts with conventional conceptions of language policy we reviewed in the previous section. [6] Although the term 'management' as used here may invite misunderstanding, the term is understood to be closer in meaning to 'health management' than 'management' in the business sense (Tokugawa & Neustupný, 1999:90). Just as we all manage our health on a quotidian basis, so do we manage language. Language managements are understood as metalinguistic activities accompanying language generation (production and reception). Here we will look at major characteristics of the theory of language management. Jernudd delineates the issues of concern with the language management model as follows:

The language-management model seeks to explain how language problems arise in the course of people's use of language, that is, in discourse, in contrast with approaches under [Joshua A.] Fishman's definition of language planning which takes decision-makers', for example governments', specification of language problems as their axiomatic point of departure. (Jernudd, 1993:133)

That is, in contrast to general language policy studies which centre on an analysis of a 'top-down' policy while paying only limited attention to micro-level language attitudes, language management studies begin from observation of language activities within concrete situations. This is in stark contrast to conventional research where 'users are not represented directly and at best only indirectly as anonymous participants in political processes' (Jernudd, 1993:138). In contrast to the study of language policy which has difficulties in dealing with 'natural currents', the theory of language management considers 'language problems' from the site of concrete language usage and hence is claimed to be able to offer analysis and proposals that respond to the situation on the ground with greater acuity. [7]

At the centre of the theory of language management is the *process* of language management. That process is basically described as below:

1: Deviation from norms
2: Noting
3: Evaluation
4: Adjustment design
5: Implementation

Focusing on such a process, various levels of language management – from that of the individual to the government – can be analyzed within language management studies. With regards to this process, there is no intrinsic difference among the levels. According to Neustupný, 'the process of organized management is a complicated version of the basic simple management process' (Neustupný, 2002), and in this way, the so-called language policy is also located in collinearity with quotidian language attitudes. In contrast to the

dichotomy mentioned in the previous section, it can be said that the theory of language management expands language policy to the realm of language attitude. In other words, rather than dividing language policy and language attitude, the theory of language management perceives micro-level language policies as existing within language attitude. Similarly, rather than dividing practise and intervention, language intervention is now found within practise. That is, according to the theory of language management, the division of language activities into 'language policy' and 'language attitude' is an unnecessary theoretical construct, and the duality vanishes. The advantage of the theory of language management is in overcoming the question, 'in what ways can language policy influence language attitude?' [8] or in other words, in overcoming a method of enquiry dependant on a rather harmful dichotomy, and in facilitating the comprehensive consideration of various levels of language activities.

Further differences between conventional language policy research and the theory of language management are such that in contrast to the former, which focuses on language in the narrow sense, the latter situates language within a broader context of interaction. And, while the former seems to assume that language problems can be observed and resolved objectively, the latter proposes that no scientifically 'correct' resolution is possible given that the treatment of language problems is strongly influenced by interests (including the researcher's own values) [9].

4. Differences in the conception of language

The differences between the theory of language management and earlier approaches to language policy tend to be understood simply in their differing focus and approach. However, the author assumes that there is a difference in the conception of language in the background. Here we will present some fundamental differences in the conceptions of language. The differences are broadly speaking two-fold.

Firstly, there is a difference pertaining to the ontology of language. In the conception of language within conventional studies of language policy, language policy was intervention to a language pre-existing as a result of a language user's language attitude. Intervention is regarded as something external to the 'natural' evolution of language.

However, within the theory of language management, managing language is an integral part of language activities. Intervention to language is assumed at any level from micro-level situations to macro-level. Language is not treated as a given entity, rather it is incorporated into the theory as something constantly constructed and revised through language activities.

A further difference is about the consciousness of language. From the conception of language within conventional language policy, conscious interventions to language are specific activities isolated from quotidian language attitudes. In the background is a tacit presumption that language activities are ordinarily unconscious. In contrast, while 'noting' in the language management is not necessary conscious, it can be conscious as well. Thus an awareness of language is incorporated into the theory of language management as one possible aspect of ordinary language activities. For example, Jernudd casts doubt on the view that language change is ordinarily unnoticed:

> People will not change use of a feature of language unless individuals pay attention to the particular features, at least in short-term memory (…) in the process of discourse (Jernudd, 1993:134)

As indicated by studies of language ideology (Schieffelin, et al. 1998), in our quotidian language life, be it regarding the self or the other, we are not solely conscious of semantic content (in the narrow sense), rather we engage in language activities while paying due attention to patterns of language usage.

Hence, there is no need for strictly distinguishing between conscious language policy and unconscious ordinary language usage. Instead of contrasting language attitudes to language policy, conscious handling of micro-level language problems in interaction (simple management) can be regarded the archetype of language management at other levels (organised management).

To sum up, the conventional study of language policy based on a dichotomous understanding of language activities professes to deal with human intervention to language while alienating language users in a double way. The assumption that there exists a given language 'just as it is' prior to intervention can be called 'the fallacy of a

pre-existing language', while the assumption that not paying attention to language is the natural language usage can be called 'the fallacy of an unconscious speaker.' These two fallacies lie behind the above mentioned dualistic understanding of language activities. By challenging these fallacies, the language management theory would overcome the dualism deeply rooted in (socio)linguistics.

The other characteristics of language management theory seen towards the end of the previous section can also be explained from this difference in the conception of language. Since language was regarded within the conception of language held by conventional language policy as a given entity which is used unconsciously, it was possible to focus on language as if it were something existing in the nature and objectively observable. On the other hand, because language activities are regarded within language management theory as an aspect of the human social behaviour, of which people are more or less aware, it must necessarily consider the interests that operate therein.

In thinking about a theory of language policy, Calvet raises the question, 'dans quelle mesure l'homme peut-il intervenir sur la langue et les langues?' (Calvet, 1996:123). This question can be answered from the perspective of language management via a question taken one step further: 'The question is not to what extent humans can intervene. Humans are already intervening incessantly in language. The question to be asked is rather, who is intervening, in what way, and to what purpose?'

5. Finally

Thus far we have addressed problems with the conventional study of language policy, taken up the theory of language management as an alternative, and investigated the differences in the conception of language thought to lie in the background. Finally, taking the above into account, I would like to consider directions of future research based on the language management theory. The theory of language management requires that language usage in interaction be considered and thereby presents language policy researchers with a more demanding task. The results can be expected to be commensurate with such difficulties and be more profound and far-reaching (Neustupný,

1994:56). Neustupný proposes that language management researchers can contribute in the following ten items (Neustupný, 1999:4):

1. Provide descriptive basic facts necessary to management
2. Identify and specify potential language problems. For example, bilingual and bicultural situations, contact situations, situations of acquisition, etc
3. Confirm the type of management currently practised
4. Search for alternative proposals to existing proposals
5. Predict the results of proposals and alternative proposals (for example, few successful cases of the oppression of language rights of ethnic minorities have been witnessed in history)
6. Specify problems of interest, authority and identity, etc and provide details
7. Some groups may be either unaware of what their own interest is, or lack the capacity to be aware of it; support the formation of an awareness of interest
8. Find a universal proposal
9. Provide proposals for each different environment
10. Consider the coexistence of various types of management

These points indicate the potential of language management studies. At the end of our discussion in this paper, I would like to emphasise one point: When we fully recognise the basic conception of language in language management theory, that language is perpetually regulated by language users including the 'awareness' of interested parties, the active participation of interested parties in the formation, implementation and evaluation of proposals at every level of language management is indispensable. Maybe language policy can learn from city planning, which has developed various ways to incorporate involved parties in the planning process (Minohara ed, 2000).

Notes

[1] This paper is based on sections that address the study of language policy from the chapters of Kimura 2005 (Chapters 1 & 2).

[2] This paper uses 'language activities' as a term for all behaviours related to language including language use and metalinguistic activities.

[3] Kasuya argues as follows:

'Language policy is by no means an appendage to the essence of language itself. Just as phonology and morphology study the essence of language at each level of the language system, so can we shed light on the social power that inherently exists within language through focusing on language policy. However, to do so requires perceiving the notion of 'language policy' more broadly than convention dictates.' (Kasuya, 1999: 75)

[4] The difference between the conceptions of language is briefly posited as follows: In contrast to language planning theory which focuses on language exclusively, language management theory situates language activities within human interaction. (Yamada, 1999:60-61).

[5] For example, notable examples of an individual's language policy activities would be positively or negatively evaluating and intervening in language choices of themselves and of others. Deciding which language to learn and to what extent is also part of individual language policies.

[6] For details of the background to the creation of this theory see Neustupný, 1997.

[7] However, see Kimura (2005) on the dangers of overemphasizing concrete situations as the point of departure and neglecting the significance of observing the macro-level dimension influencing the situation.

[8] For example, an overview article of language education policy and language attitude states as follow:

"attention must be paid to the question of whether and to what extent educational policy measures (…) serve to strengthen or even create attitudes towards language" (Christ, 1997:10)

[9] The differences between both as mentioned here are encompassed by Neustupný's reference chart (1995:71). Needless to say, it is possible to include the perspectives raised here as a characteristic of language management in studies not referring to this model, and conversely, no doubt some studies that deal with language management by name would not include various points raised as characteristics of language management theory. It is *not* the case that individual studies are clearly distinguishable. It will be necessary to enquire to which extent studies on language policy and language management actually contain perspectives raised by language management theory.

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