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Metalinguistic activities as a focus of sociolinguistic research: Language Management Theory, its potential, and fields of application

Abstract: The paper aims at identifying common features in various fields of sociolinguistic research which would help rationalize methodological procedures and increase their efficiency. To this end, the paper discusses Language Management Theory, which focuses on the metalinguistic activities or behavior toward language of various social actors. Such metalinguistic activities represent a common denominator interconnecting seemingly heterogeneous fields of sociolinguistic research. The paper considers the possibilities of connecting such fields in various research areas. These include processes of language standardization and destandardization, the establishment of pluricentric standards, language attitudes research, the conceptualization of descriptive versus prescriptive linguistics, gender-related issues, language law, the management of multilingualism, and efforts aimed at strengthening the status of a language in a state or international organization. The discussion focuses on phenomena of agency, processes of the behavior toward language, the interconnection of the micro and macro levels of these processes, and the need to take socio-cultural, communicative as well as linguistic dimensions into consideration. Such a synthetic perspective would help generate and answer new fruitful research questions.

Keywords: language management theory, research potential, language problems, metalinguistic activities, social actor, micro-macro linkage

1 Introduction

Along with theorizing language use in social contexts from various perspectives, sociolinguistics is one of the interdisciplines reflecting on, and contributing to, solutions to various social and language problems. For sociolinguistics, dealing with language problems means designing metalinguistic tools which are grounded in a reliable theoretical framework. This paper discusses the potential of a sociolinguistic theory which aims at systematic analyses of the metalinguistic activities of various social actors. Metalinguistic activities refer to the behavior of speakers toward lan-

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guage, which has also been termed ‘language management’ (Neustupný and Jernudd 1987; Nekvapil 2016).

Language Management Theory (hereinafter as LMT) encompasses the following features (Kimura and Fairbrother 2020; Fairbrother et al. 2018; Dovalil and Šichová 2017):

- 1) the actors involved in language-related behavior, their interests, social status, power and their (more or less complex) social networks;
- 2) the interplay between the micro and macro levels on which social actors conduct these activities;
- 3) the processual character of this behavior and its division into several phases;
- 4) the interconnection of socioeconomic, communicative and linguistic levels of language management activities.

Language problems have been one of the foci of LMT from the very beginning. As Neustupný (1978: 243–257, 2002) and Jernudd (1987) point out, LMT can be considered as a theory of language problems.¹

LMT provides researchers with a broad range of tools which can be applied to seemingly unrelated and heterogeneous concepts and research objects. Thanks to LMT’s metalinguistic basis, research on topics such as language attitudes, standard languages, language law, the status of a language in international organizations or states can be conducted systematically with a unified and coherent theoretical basis. In the following I will first discuss the notion of LMT in relation to metalinguistic activities and provide a short outline of the types of language management, the management processes and the different levels of language management. Next, I will present examples that showcase language management processes in the field of standardization and pluricentric management. Finally, to highlight the potential of LMT, I will illustrate the applicability of the theory in various fields of sociolinguistics.

2 Metalinguistic activities and language management

The starting point of the theory consists in differentiating between two aspects of language use: on the one hand, utterances and other communicative acts are generated; on the other hand, these utterances and other communicative acts may become objects of behavior towards language in a broader sense.² The former aspects concern

¹ Obviously, this claim should not be misinterpreted in terms of offering ready solutions to language problems. For the conceptualization and classification of such problems, see Lanstyák (2021).

² Although the concept of *behavior* may traditionally (mis)lead to interpret the respective activities as interventional, it is necessary to point out that non-interventional activities are also included (Lanstyák 2021: 65–66).

the processes of language production and reception, while the latter are metalinguistic in nature. The term language management – as used in this paper – is closely related to the theoretical framework which was established by Neustupný and Jernudd.

Apart from this consistent theoretical approach, there are two additional meanings of this term (for an overview, see Sanden 2016). Spolsky (2004, 2009, and 2012) conceptualizes *language management* as one of three interrelated but independent components of *language policy* (along with *language practices* and *language beliefs/ideology*). Spolsky's understanding of language management can be explained as “efforts by people or institutions inside or outside a community to modify the beliefs and practices of members of the community” (Spolsky 2021: 9). This is synonymous with interventions into language use and/or into language ideology. Although it has undergone some modifications since its inception (concentration on the domain approach, role of individual speakers), this conceptualization of language policy consisting of these three pillars – with effects on the position and substance of language management – “was and remains the basic model” (Spolsky 2021: 9).

The third interpretation of the concept of language management is interconnected with business. It refers to labor productivity and efforts to increase the efficiency of communication within business companies. As Sanden (2016: 526) puts it, “[t]his understanding of language management has much in common with the wider field of strategic management, and it is therefore not surprising that the main contributors to this particular research field are management scholars.”

With regard to the position of LMT within the paradigm of language policy and planning schools and their methodologies, Baldauf and Hamid (2018: 46) classify the language management approach as one of four specific and distinctive schools, along with the classical school, the domain-focused approach and critical social studies (for more paradigm-related questions see also Fairbrother and Kimura 2020: 7–12; Nekvapil 2006, 2016).³ They argue that, by reflecting on language problems as components of social issues, LMT is a general theory which goes beyond linguistics in the traditional sense and which systematically pays attention to socioeconomic as well as sociocultural issues (Baldauf and Hamid 2018: 51–53). Based on communicative acts taking place in interactions, this theory is situation oriented. LMT builds on the interplay of bottom-up and top-down perspectives, interconnecting micro-level with macro-level and social structure with agency.

From a methodological point of view, LMT also makes use of ethnographic observations and notes, and various kinds of interviews (follow-up, semi-structured, interaction and narrative interviews, both as dyadic and group interviews). It is able to work with naturally occurring interactions (methods of conversation analysis with its

³ As for the ethnographic approach, Baldauf and Hamid remark that they “would like to add an ‘ethnographic school’ which has dominated the field in recent years” (Baldauf and Hamid 2018: 46). This explains why the number of schools oscillates between four and five in various passages of their article.

analysis of repair sequences) as well as written materials in multiple genres (content analysis as a part of discourse analysis), and data from linguistic landscape research (analysis of signs, e.g. in public spaces). Most of the methods utilized in LMT studies are qualitative in nature, but the use of quantitative methods is also possible.⁴

With follow-up interviews, participants are asked to reconstruct the management process which occurred in the analyzed interaction (or other kinds of management acts, e.g. correction of a test) (Neustupný 1999). After replaying a part of the recorded interaction (or after the correction of a test), the researcher invites the participant to reflect and comment on the recorded interaction (or on his/her decisions made during the correction process). Due to the practical difficulties in recording immediate follow-up interviews, LMT makes use of interaction interviews, in which participants try to reconstruct the past interactions/management acts. These interaction interviews enable the researcher to approximate the interactions (or the management acts) in a relevant way (Neustupný 2003 and Neustupný 2018 [1994]).

3 Types and features of language management

3.1 Simple and organized management

Activities aimed at language or communication can be undertaken by two kinds of social actors (Nekvapil 2009: 4–6, 2016: 14–17):

- (1) individuals in particular interactions, for example, when language users switch to another language/variety, because they note that their communication partners do not understand them well or when interlocutors begin to speak more slowly or to articulate more distinctly for the same reason. For this type of language management, the term *simple management* has been coined to refer to the *micro-level of interactions*. Simple management occurs in many everyday interactions, e.g., interactions within families, between a customer and a shop assistant, between a medical practitioner and a patient, between a pupil and a teacher.
- (2) institutions or organizations, e.g. governments, language academies, ministries, or international organizations. Although the management is carried out by individuals, these persons act on behalf of the respective institution, unlike in the case of simple management. For these kinds of processes, the term *organized management* has been coined to refer to the *macro-level* of communication which extends beyond immediate interactions. Correspondingly, the acts of organized

⁴ Referring to the position of LMT within the paradigm of language policy and planning schools, Mwaniki points out internal distinctions within LMT. He differentiates between three traditions: (1) the Israeli/American, based on the work of Spolsky, (2) the European/Asia-Pacific, developed by Neustupný and Jernudd, and (3) the recently established African tradition (Mwaniki 2011: 246–253).

management are (1) trans-interactive, (2) carried out in social networks of higher complexity, and (3) rich in theory- as well as ideology-based interventions. Moreover, (4) communication about the management acts takes place, and (5) in addition to the language used in interactions, the object of organized management is language as a system (i.e. *langue* in the structuralist terminology).

Instances of organized management are as frequent as those of simple management. Organized management may be exemplified by linguistic codification, spelling reforms, language laws, or regulation of (first, second, foreign, minority) language teaching within the education system of a country or a region.

3.2 Description of the management process

Understanding the dynamics of metalinguistic activities through which behavior toward language is realized in discourses is one of the biggest methodological challenges for sociolinguistics. LMT proposes to divide such dynamics into several phases. What underlies the whole process are social actors' expectations and/or the attention they pay to various language-related phenomena (Nekvapil 2016). If these expectations are fulfilled, no management process is triggered.

The language management process starts at the moment a deviation from these expectations occurs, or when a phenomenon attracts a social actor's attention. Deviations or other phenomena may be noted, or not. If a deviation is not noted, the management process does not begin, because an unnoted deviation actually corresponds to a non-existent deviation from the subjective point of view.⁵ Once a phenomenon or a deviation from the expectation is noted, the process may enter the next phase – evaluation. A noted phenomenon may be evaluated, or not. Provided that it is evaluated, this evaluation may be positive, negative, or somewhere between these two poles of the continuum. The positive evaluation is called gratification (Neustupný 2003: 127, 135–137). If a noted deviation (or another phenomenon) is gratified, the process does not continue, because the social actors agree with the deviations and there is no need to adjust them. Gratification means strengthening the use of the respective variant, which may lead to its stabilization. However, if the evaluation is negative, the social

⁵ The term 'noting' should not be confused with 'noticing' a deviation/phenomenon. Noting suggests a discursive activity, in which an utterance is generated and communicated to other participants, while noticing primarily denotes a psychological act of perception that does not necessarily lead to an utterance. Noticing the deviations from the expectations can be indirectly assessed by carefully designed psycho-/neurolinguistic experiments (see e.g. Hanulíková et al. 2012, or Hanulíková 2021). When noticed phenomena are not articulated outwardly, the interlocutors do not have a chance of finding out what happens in the speaker's consciousness, what exactly the speaker is paying (or has paid) attention to, etc. (for more details see Marriott and Nekvapil 2012).

actors have reasons to design adjustments to solve the language problem. The last phase of the process consists in the implementation of such adjustments. Similarly to all previous phases, it may be that the social actors fail to design appropriate adjustments and/or to implement them.

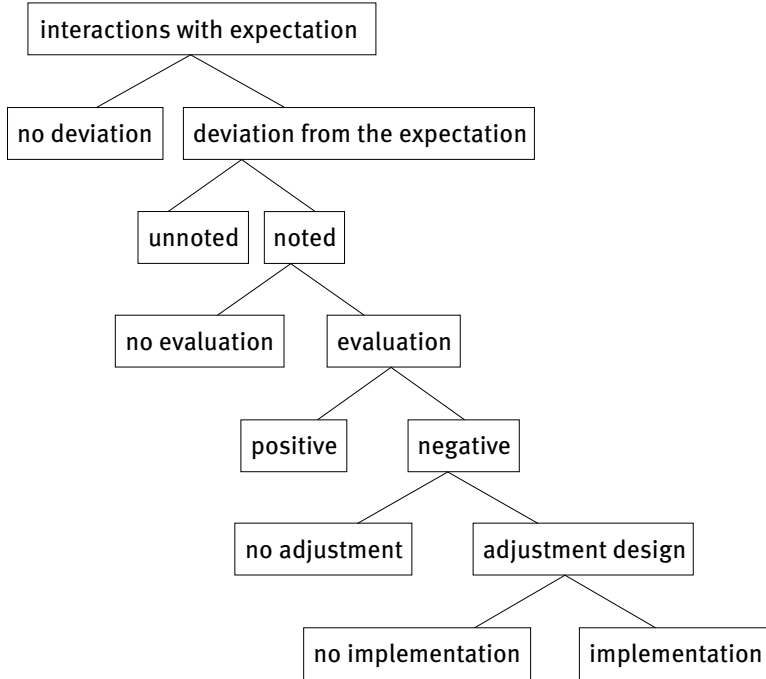
The management process is cyclical in nature. Its individual phases occur one after the other, the later phase being conditioned by the previous one. Thus, in terms of LMT, it is not reasonable to analyze an evaluation without considering the noting process, since if a phenomenon is evaluated, the speaker must have necessarily noted this phenomenon before. Similar holds for the implementation of an adjustment design which is not possible without a preceding negative evaluation. Due to the cyclical character of the process, it is possible to explain the incentives to repeat attempts which were not successful in the past. It is the expectations of social actors – or rather the deviations from these expectations – which trigger a new cycle of the management process.⁶

One of the advantages of LMT is that its tools can be systematically applied to situations in which potential problems in future interactions are anticipated. These can include various preparatory activities such as looking up words, phrases or other structures in a dictionary, grammar or textbook, consulting on language issues with language experts, or even avoidance strategies such as preferring written communication to oral communication, bringing along a translator, an interpreter, or avoiding the interaction completely (Nekvapil and Sherman 2009b). Thus, management activities may be planned before the actual interactions start (pre-interaction management). Similarly, when participants learn a lesson from language problems experienced in the past, post-interaction management activities are undertaken. Post-interaction management may obviously turn into pre-interaction management if related to a future interaction.

What is valuable for the operationalization of practical research questions is that the structure and phases of the management process provide researchers with strategic theory-driven questions. From a methodological point of view, the terms coined for all phases of the process can be used, e.g. in the form of predicates, when formulating questions in interviews. Moreover, it is possible to use these terms when evaluating and interpreting the data collected, since they clearly indicate in which phase the

⁶ Kimura has recently promoted the idea of introducing *feedback* as a new final phase of the process after implementation (Fairbrother and Kimura 2020: 6; Kimura and Fairbrother 2020: 260–261). Although this suggestion appears plausible, feedback may be included in the shorter cycle finishing with implementation, since the results of implementation can be measured against the original expectations which triggered the first management cycle. Measuring the effects of implementation, social actors may note deviations from their original expectations in the new situation, or not (followed up by potential re-evaluation). Hence, with regard to Occam's razor *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*, the feedback does not appear to be indispensable as an additional phase.

respective data are located, what logically precedes and what follows. Hence, follow-up interviews may be planned systematically and strategically. The whole process can be illustrated by the following diagram (adapted from Dovalil and Šichová 2017: 21):



3.3 Micro-macro interconnection

Considering the various social actors taking part in management processes, LMT claims that it is possible to systematically interconnect the micro-level of individual interactions and the macro-level of social organizations (Kimura and Fairbrother 2020). The basic idea is that a part of the process may be delegated from the micro-level, at which linguistic phenomena or deviations from the expectations are noted, to institutions representing the macro-level of social processes. Implementation is an issue which again concerns the micro-level. In this sense, organized management influences simple management and vice versa. Without taking all details into account, several global situations of the interplay may be modeled (Nekvapil 2009).

1. In an ideal case, language users note the language problems which are solved by linguistic institutions. Their solutions are accepted by ordinary speakers/writers.
2. Language users note the problems and delegate the solutions to institutions. Unlike in the first case, though, the institutions are either not able to design

- appropriate adjustments, or these adjustments are not accepted by language users at the micro-level. In this case, the process terminates at the macro-level.
3. Experts in institutions design adjustments irrespective of interests and problems experienced by speakers/writers. Despite this fact, these institutions are powerful enough to impose the adjustments on the language users. In such cases, the process is initiated at the macro-level (e.g., German spelling reform).
 4. Problems of language users are solved in interactions at the micro-level only. This situation corresponds to simple management.
 5. Institutions, represented by experts, do not note the problems of ordinary speakers/writers and design adjustments without considering their implementation. This case is classified as organized management on the macro level only.

3.4 Levels of language management

LMT does not concentrate exclusively on language-related issues in the traditional sense, but it has a broader scope (Nekvapil 2016; Lanstyák 2021). The theory takes into account that (“organized”) solutions to language problems should start with solutions to the associated socio-cultural/economic and communicative problems. Against this background, the theory proposes a recommended sequence of activities when social actors strive for successful implementation of their efforts:

1. socio-cultural and/or socio-economic management (ideological issues, economic preconditions, supply-demand interplay, legal framework, interests of the education system, culture-based bias, etc., see Barat et al. 2013)
2. communicative management (social networks of interlocutors, communicative practices)
3. language management in the narrower sense (i.e. management of language structures)

This sequence also helps to explain situations in which these efforts fail. Related to many well-intended attempts to revitalize minority languages or dialects (in terms of achieving as great a knowledge of such a language/dialect as possible), a situation may be roughly modeled as follows: provided the circumstances on the socio-cultural or socio-economic level (1) are rich in impediments (reluctance to fund adequate programs, ideology and bias against the minority/dialect, unsuitable legal framework, lack of qualified teachers/experts, etc.) the establishment of social networks of people using this minority language/dialect in their everyday communication (2) is hindered. Consequently, it does not pay off to concentrate on improving didactic materials and teaching aids for this minority language/dialect (3).

According to the recommendation of LMT, it would make sense rather to manage the socio-cultural and socio-economic circumstances first, so that these circumstances do not inhibit the formation of social networks in which the demand for a

good command of the language/dialect reproduces itself as naturally as possible. This opens up opportunities for the last step, which consists in improving a speaker's knowledge of their own language/dialect so that it can be used meaningfully. Obviously, a parallel situation may be modeled for successful language standardization and the use of a standard variety.

All phases of the management process as well as its levels discussed above are pervaded by social actors' interests and power relations. The interests and power, co-defining the status of social actors, condition the success of their management activities. Diverging interests accompanied by unequal power allow for the identification and analysis of social conflicts (for an overview and case studies see Nekula et al. 2022).

4 Fields of application of the LMT paradigm in sociolinguistic research

There are two large sets of situations which can be understood by means of LMT quite effectively when common features of the respective situation are identified. The first set is primarily derived from the management process and its structure. The examples in the following sections illustrate phases which have been reached, or phases where the management process is interrupted. The basic interest of actors participating in these processes is the quality and cultivation of language use, which may differ in various social contexts and networks of speakers/writers with different social status. These types of language management settings are exemplified by language standardization and other related phenomena (see sections 4.1 – 4.5)

The second group of examples is primarily based on the subject matter of the management acts, not on the phases of the process. Unlike in the previous case, the second group illustrates different problems the behavior toward language is aimed at. Thus, the objectives of various social actors' interests may relate to the status of a language in a region, a country or an international organization; to gender-related issues; or to the management of language problems associated with multilingualism (see Section 5).

4.1 Management of standard varieties, and language decline

Processes of language standardization represent a typical example of organized language management. Social actors participating in these processes behave toward language with a view to creating a cultivated and prestigious variety which is systematically taught in schools, used in supraregional media, in formal situations, and which is usually codified in grammars, dictionaries and handbooks.

One of the methodological inconsistencies of traditional research on standard varieties concerns the overestimation of *object language*: drawing upon linguistic corpora, the usage-based approach neglects most *metalinguistic* activities. Such an approach also ignores the fact that norms and standard varieties represent social (= interactive) phenomena. This methodological inconsistency can be remedied if the behavior toward standard language, which is conducted by relevant agents, is analyzed systematically. To study standard varieties, it is not enough to focus on the study of language use; metalinguistic data are indispensable. Language use is typically reflected in items and structures that frequently occur in model texts (*object language*). However, these variants may not be considered standard variants, as long as relevant social actors such as language norm authorities, linguists and codifiers do not designate them as standard variants. Since the (usually long-term) processes of negotiating and re-negotiating standard varieties are very complex, finding a consensus with empirical evidence among these social actors may be difficult. Therefore, from a methodological point of view, it is necessary to emphasize that language use itself – which can be described by the frequencies of individual variants occurring in various text types – need not be equated with a standard variety. The simplest case could be a situation in which a teacher, codifier or linguist just makes a decision about a particular variant and classifies it as standard. This minimalist act is metalinguistic in nature. As soon as a pupil, student or other language user dealing with this variant starts opposing this decision and initiates an interaction, the metalinguistic character of this activity becomes even more explicit.

Reconsidering the corpus-based approach and referring to the tools offered by LMT, a critical view of the question of *what is standard* can be complemented with the question of *who decides* about what is standard, *how, in interactions with whom, in which social contexts, with which intentions, and with which consequences*. This approach highlights how standard varieties are (re)shaped in interactions focussing on the dynamic nature of managing standard varieties. The management processes aimed at shaping standard varieties are triggered by the normative expectations of the relevant social actors. Normative expectations are not given up even if the social reality – the language use in this case – does not repeatedly correspond to the content of these expectations. Typical examples of this kind can be found in schools where teachers encounter numerous mistakes which regularly repeat themselves. Notwithstanding, the teachers maintain their expectations and go on correcting the problematic variants (for more details see Dovalil 2015b and 2020). The management process goes through all phases, culminating in successful implementation.

When the standard variety is managed, the deviations noted from the normative expectations are evaluated negatively and alternative variants complying with this standard are implemented as traditional corrections (sanctions). The deviations triggering the process are viewed as errors. If the standard is implemented in such a way that errors are corrected and the corrections enforced, the whole management cycle with all phases, including implementation, is constantly repeated. Emphasiz-

ing successful implementation is very important in this context, because it provides empirical evidence for the fact that particular variants are not used any more (at least for the time being). In this case, people acting with the social status of language norm authorities (e.g. teachers or editors in the media) are powerful enough to impose the corrections on their subjects' language productions (e.g. pupils, students, journalists, or other contributors).

Another situation that can be comparatively analyzed by means of LMT tools in connection with language standardization relates to language decline. In this case, it can be argued that the language management process is triggered by (rather conservative) social actors clinging to the traditional standard as it has been established so far. Based on this assumption, deviations from such rather normative expectations are noted in quite complex public discourses and evaluated negatively. These social actors typically complain about "bad language" in public media, often without being able to design appropriate adjustments as adequate solutions. And even if they manage to come up with such adjustments (e.g. referring to dictionaries or grammars), they are not powerful enough to have them implemented (i.e. to make other speakers use these variants).

4.2 Management of pluricentric standards

As a related example, the course of the management process enables us to identify crucial points in the establishment of monocentric and pluricentric standards. An illustrative example may be based on a simple situation from an Austrian school in which a pupil uses the Austrian variants *Marille*, *Paradeiser*, *Erdapfel* for the lexical variables *apricot*, *tomato* and *potato* in a test. The monocentric pattern of the behavior toward the dominant standard German would appear if these Austrianisms were noted, negatively evaluated and corrected and the pupil was forced to acquire (and start using) the German standard variants *Aprikose*, *Tomate* and *Kartoffel* instead.

It is the strong normative monocentric expectation that underlies the prototypical course of the management process in which the norm authority notes, i.e. does not overlook, such a deviation and evaluates it negatively. In the next phase, this person is able to design an adjustment which would replace the Austrian variants with the German ones. This correction is usually accompanied by a sanction in terms of a bad grade, which underpins the negative evaluation from the previous phase. If the teacher is able to make the pupils use the variants *Aprikose*, *Tomate* and *Kartoffel* instead of the Austrian equivalents, one whole cycle of the management process is completed. From a methodological point of view, the decisive phase of implementation is verifiable in a simple way by analysing the extent to which the pupils are using the variants in both the written and spoken mode.

This simple example shows that it is the language structures that undergo changes as a result of language management conducted by powerful social actors (variants

of Austrian standard German are replaced by those of German standard German). Consequently, the monocentric-oriented expectations of the actors have remained unchanged and can be reformulated as follows: in those texts for which standard variants are adequate, the lexical variables *apricot*, *tomato* and *potato* should be realized by means of the variants *Aprikose*, *Tomate* and *Kartoffel* respectively.

This course of language management differs from the pluricentric standard. When pluricentric standards are managed, some noted deviations from the normative expectations based on the monocentric standard are evaluated positively (gratification), or at least not entirely negatively.⁷ This fact brings the process to a halt. The gratification of the deviations contributes to the stabilization of these deviating structures, which is of great importance particularly in public discourses and normative settings. Therefore, this kind of management does not lead to changes in the variants. Rather, it illustrates and strengthens gradual changes in the content of the expectations (when compared to the original monocentric standard) in further cycles of language management. Referring to the three lexical variables discussed in the previous paragraphs, the difference becomes obvious: when another user of German has already acquired the expectation that these variables are realized through *Marille*, *Paradeiser* and *Erdapfel* in the Austrian standard, the process does not even start, because no deviation from such expectations arises. What has changed in this second case is not the linguistic structure, but the content of the expectation.

4.3 Destandardization and use of a language as a lingua franca

Focusing on the management process also enables us to operationalize language destandardization (and demotization) quite effectively (Dovalil 2020: 187–192). Instead of raising the question of how standard varieties are shaped (i.e. who intervenes in whose language use, how, in which situational contexts and social networks, based on which expectations and interests to achieve a standard variety), a contrastive question may be formulated: Who stops managing whose language use in which situational contexts and social networks, based on which expectations, when radical weakening of the standard variety is taking place? Stopping the management process can be related to all individual phases. This situation reflects the weakening of the status of norm authorities.

Unlike the cases in which standardized varieties are shaped in that the adequate adjustment designs are implemented, the management processes of a language used

⁷ Obviously, there is an essential precondition that needs to be repeated and emphasized: the general expectations underlying the management process discussed are oriented toward a language *standard*. Many deviations from the monocentric standard are variants of dialects – independent of the region where these variants are used. Austrian or Swiss dialects represent deviations from the German standard just like Low German dialectal variants differ from the Austrian and Swiss standards.

as a lingua franca are barely triggered, or they stop in the phase of noting a deviation from the expectations as they are derived from the communicative practices with experienced and qualified speakers in formal and cultivated contexts. The reason is that the content of expectations is very different from expectations concerning the standard language: interlocutors using a language as a lingua franca are expected to make themselves understood, with the cultivated way of speaking (and writing) playing a rather inferior role. What typically occurs in interactions between speakers of a foreign language is that these language users will hear (or read) plenty of deviations on the level of pronunciation, spelling, morphology, syntax, vocabulary as well as pragmatics. As long as interlocutors understand each other – or more precisely – as long as they assume they understand, such deviations may be perceived, but these deviations are no longer evaluated. Under these circumstances, socio-cultural management does not push the process further.⁸ Only when a particular interaction does not fulfill its basic communication function, leading to negative evaluations by both interlocutors, relevant management processes are triggered.

4.4 Integrating language attitudes into the language management framework

By encompassing research methods of language attitudes, LMT is also able to show the position of this research area in a larger sociolinguistic context. Traditional large-scale research on attitudes is typically carried out by means of questionnaires and (structured) interviews, primarily concentrating on evaluation (see Garrett 2010; Preston 2010; Adler and Plewnia 2019),⁹ while smaller-scale studies often use matched-guise techniques. However, in traditional language attitude research, the phase of noting, which precedes evaluation, as well as the phases following up to it (adjustment design and implementation), are not systematically operationalized in all their perspectives. Yet, evaluation is logically unthinkable without noting. At the same time, evaluation represents only one phase of language management and the process may terminate in this phase or not.

Neglecting the role of agency with the crucial question of *who notes what on behalf of which social actors?* might essentially distort the results and the shape of social reality if linguists determined (some parts of) their data on behalf of the respondents. On the one hand, researchers may make respondents note phenomena or issues to which these respondents (would) pay no attention in authentic settings. Thus, these

⁸ If this happened – which cannot be ruled out in all circumstances – criticizing the interlocutor for e.g. “non-native” pronunciations or poor vocabulary would probably be evaluated as quite inappropriate.

⁹ As Garrett (2010: 20) puts it, “it is taken as a given that an attitude is an evaluative orientation to a social object of some sort, whether it is a language, or a new government policy, etc.”

procedures prefer the *etic* to the *emic* perspective. Even though matched-guise tests represent a more indirect approach,¹⁰ in both cases it is the researcher who guides the respondents' attention and perception. On the other hand, traditional language attitude research may neglect further phases of the behavior toward language (adjustment designs and implementation) as they come after a negative evaluation.

To sum up in terms of LMT, the phase of evaluation, which is central for research on attitudes, is located in the middle of the management process and surrounded by several more interconnected phases.

4.5 Positioning descriptive or prescriptive linguistics

The last example, based on the structure of the management process, illustrates some analytical relations to linguistics in general. Since linguistics constitutes a large amount of metalinguistic activities *par excellence* it must be possible – with reference to the definition of the language management concept – to understand this scientific discipline with the tools of LMT. The traditional division of linguistics into a descriptive and a prescriptive branch (see Curzan 2014) enables us to demonstrate the substance of the idea.

In terms of prescriptivism, evaluative opinions and views are typical, which sometimes discredits this field as “not objective” (or even “not scientific”). Referring to the management process, we can observe the phase of noting a deviation from an individual expectation, followed by evaluation. Negative evaluations are very common for prescriptivism, which legitimizes the efforts to drive the management further to specific adjustment designs. Moreover, these adjustments should be implemented eventually to replace the negatively evaluated variants with the appropriate ones. Prescriptivism involves interventions in behavior toward language.

Unlike prescriptive linguistics, descriptivism systematically disapproves of evaluative judgments. Representing non-interventional metalinguistic activities, descriptive linguistics aims at observing, registering, recording or – to use the LMT tools once again – noting the language as it is used in various forms and situations. Generally speaking, as deviations are for logical reasons (almost?) non-existent, linguists are reluctant to distinguish between good/better and bad/worse variants. Descriptive linguistics operates on the basis of noting language use for the purpose of further analysis.

¹⁰ Exemplifying the types of, and difficulties in, data elicitation concerning language attitudes, Garrett (2010: 37–52) differentiates between the direct approach, the indirect approach and societal treatment studies. He characterizes the latter as “the least obtrusive overall, in that it generally works from texts of observations of various kinds rather than through eliciting responses” (Garrett 2010: 52). This feature (i.e. the interest in, and the proximity to, naturally occurring behavior) relates societal treatment studies to LMT.

5 Further fields of application of the LMT paradigm in sociolinguistic research

5.1 Gender-related issues

The substance of gender-related language problems are language structures which are supposed to lead to equal treatment of women, men and non-binary persons (for an overview see Nübling and Kotthoff 2018). People pursuing these interests and involved in these activities usually note many deviations which are derived from expectations that people should be treated equally. The research concentrates on both noting these deviations (e.g. using generic masculine forms), followed by a negative evaluation thereof, and finding adjustments (appropriate structures containing female and other inclusive elements), which are the object of heated sociolinguistic as well as public debates. Apart from these process-related observations, it is relevant to study the socio-cultural preconditions of various language communities, including the ideological components, which either drive the gender-related management further, or which impede these efforts. From a methodological point of view, it is obvious that pursuing and implementing these interests is necessarily co-conditioned by power and social status of the respective social actor and social contexts in which their activities are conducted.

5.2 LMT and language law

The domain of language law represents another kind of language management *par excellence*. What is specific to this case are the social actors and clearly pre-defined hierarchical relations between them (judicial system, authorities, legislative and executive bodies, citizens, legal persons of various kinds). The legal discourse consists of two main types of adjustment designs. On the one hand, these include the language legislation and language-related case law with numerous texts of the sources of law¹¹ (*law in books*, taken for prepared solutions *sui generis* to legally relevant problems); on the other hand, enforceable judgments are issued to be implemented in individual cases (*case law*, *law in action*). Another specific feature of language law relates to micro-macro interconnections: all disputes start at the micro-level, they are solved at

¹¹ A source of law is a text from which the law is recognized. Which text is a source of law is authoritatively defined by legislation. A text can become a source of law only on condition that it is approved by unique authorities (typically by parliaments or international organizations). Thus, sources of law are constitutions, treaties, regulations, directives, laws, acts, and statutes (for more details see Dovalil 2012: 265–266).

the macro-level by courts, and enforceable judgments are implemented at the micro-level again (for detailed analyses drawing upon LMT see Dovalil 2012 and 2015a).

A specific part of this area concerns the status-related as well as the acquisition-related aspects of languages. Metalinguistic activities of social actors may articulate interests leading to codifying the status of a language as official, working, minority, national, or first foreign language in a country, region or an international organization (its authorities). Managing these issues is also derived from various actors' expectations (and from the deviations from these expectations). Legal frameworks defining the status of a language clearly determine, and are a part of, the socio-cultural circumstances of individual language situations. These circumstances may, in turn, support or inhibit the establishment of social networks in which the respective language is used (taught, or learned).

5.3 Management of multilingualism

The current post-modern period with considerable mobility and intercultural language contact is, among other things, characterized by superdiversity, which generates even more language problems (Vertovec 2007, Creese and Blackledge 2018; for language management in contact situations of various types see e.g. Nekvapil and Sherman 2009a and 2018, Nemoto 2011, Fairbrother 2015, or Dovalil 2022). Multilingual settings, being so rich in using many different languages, enable us to observe and analyze complex processes in which people try to make themselves understood. Not understanding represents probably the most typical deviation from speakers' expectations in general and triggers (cycles of) management processes. The management of multilingualism is a challenge not only for individual (foreign) language learners and users at the micro-level, but also for entities at the macro-level such as the European Union (its institutions and agencies) or any other international organization. Obviously, legal tools are used to solve a part of these language problems.

6 Conclusion and future prospects

This paper has demonstrated the benefits of methodological harmonization of sociolinguistic research on language problems and metalinguistic activities conducted on a uniform and systematic theoretical basis. Such possibilities contribute to a rationalization of methodology and research procedures. By interconnecting seemingly unrelated and heterogeneous research objects, LMT as a scientific theory enables us to systematize broader sociolinguistic knowledge focused on behavior toward language. By identifying the common denominator in metalinguistic activities, LMT clearly contributes to the synthesis of otherwise fragmented points of view. The theory is

verifiable as well as concise, drawing upon a well elaborated set of tools. Moreover, LMT is able to guide future research by generating fruitful research questions. LMT makes them falsifiable and testable not only within sociolinguistics, but also with regard to the potential of deepening desirable cross-disciplinary ties. LMT helps to make research on metalinguistic activities more visible alongside traditional objects of linguistic research, such as language as a system, language use, and cognitive processes.

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