10
Language Management in the Japanese Workplace

Lisa Fairbrother
Sophia University, Tokyo

10.1 Introduction

Although language planning has most commonly been associated with the language policies of governments and national-level institutions, it is also undertaken by multinational corporations in order to facilitate communication within their organizations (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006). However, despite the high concentration of multinational corporations in Japan, very little research has been conducted on the language policy occurring in these workplaces (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2012).

This chapter will examine the language policies of multinational corporations and micro-level reactions to such official corporate language policy in branches of multinational companies in the Tokyo area. By applying language management theory (Jernudd and Neustupný, 1987; Nekvapil, 2009), and by analysing the episodes of language management recounted by Japanese and non-Japanese employees at multinational companies, it will be shown how corporate language policy can be a source of friction and struggle on the micro level, particularly regarding the devaluation of the individual's linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), differing perceptions of the necessity of particular languages on the micro level, and conflicts over how to use English. In addition, this chapter will examine the dialectical relationship between the micro and macro levels (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006), whilst emphasizing the necessity to recognize the existence of multiple interests and agents on the micro level.

10.2 Literature review

10.2.1 Language policy in multinationals

Research into language policy in multinationals has shown how different languages can wield different power in the workplace. For example, being proficient in the right languages, particularly the company's 'home language', English and the local language, can be a great source of power in multinational corporations (Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999). However, if the official company language changes to English, employees' skills in other languages can become devalued, with employees feeling as if their professionalism has been taken away (Vaara et al., 2005).

Yet, as Roberts (2010) points out, there is often a 'gap between the official rhetoric of institutions and the policies on the ground and the linguistic ideology that underpins both of them' (p. 221). Indeed, Lüdi et al. (2010) show that even though the official corporate language might be English, plurilingual employees' 'language practice' is actually 'multiform and dynamic' (p. 231). Furthermore, Amelina (2010), in her study of Russian L1 professionals in Germany, questions the overriding power of English and insists instead that English 'does not displace other languages nor does it dominate them in all the domains of interactions' (p. 250). In fact, it is 'the mother tongue and the host language, which are primarily used for network building, personal relationship maintenance and for career development', and in 'competing situations', the host language, in this case German, not English, 'is used as an instrument of power imposition and exclusion' (p. 251).

However, little research has focused on language policy issues in multinationals with offices based in Japan. One exception is Peltokorpi and Vaara's (2012) extensive study of policy and practices in the Japanese subsidiaries of foreign multinationals. Their study shows that language practices on the local level are often hybrid in nature and so do not merely reflect the top-down implementation of official corporate policy, but are rather the 'result of the interplay of HQ strategies and local responses' (p. 825). They also highlight the role of key local actors in determining the actual level of language policy implementation, the 'pervasive power implications of language policies and practices' (p. 825) and the different effects that language policy can have on different levels of human resource management. Nevertheless, there are no studies that focus on daily-life micro-level interactions in the Japanese offices of multinationals, and specifically look at how employees perceive and react to corporate language policy in the course of their everyday work activities. While building on the findings of past research, this chapter will focus on how issues relating to official corporate language(s) are managed in the micro-level interactions of employees in the Tokyo offices of three European-owned multinationals.

10.2.2 Language management theory

The theoretical framework used in this study is language management theory (LMT: Jernudd and Neustupný, 1987; Nekvapil, 2009), which focuses on the processes involved in the perception, evaluation and removal of 'language problems'. This theory is *not* to be confused with the more general term, 'language management', used by Bernard Spolsky (2009; see Jernudd, 2010), which does *not* specifically look at the management of language problems as a four-stage process. LMT, on the other hand, deals with the processes behind the noting and removal of 'language problems' and is firmly grounded in discourse. As Neustupný (1985, p. 45) posits, 'apart from the necessity to examine the end product language, we are equally – or perhaps primarily – interested in processes which develop in linguistic discourse'. This similarly applies to the language planning process as a whole:

> any act of language planning should start with the consideration of language problems as they appear in discourse, and the planning process should not be considered complete until the removal of the problems is implemented in discourse. (Neustupný, 1994a, p. 50)

Therefore, LMT forces us to look not only at what language policies exist, but where the motivation for such policy comes from, how the policy is evaluated and whether it is actually implemented in the micro-level discourse of the people for whom this planning has been conducted. We need to know who noted the language problem in the first place, how they evaluated it, what solutions they designed and whether, or how far, those solutions are actually being implemented.

The language management (LM) process follows four key stages, namely (1) the noting of a deviation from a norm or expectation, (2) the evaluation of the deviation (either negatively or positively), (3) the design of an adjustment to remove the deviation, and (4) the implementation of the adjustment design. The process may also stop at any of these stages.

Obviously, when we think about these processes on the micro and macro/meso levels they will have different characteristics, and Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) point out two broad types of LM. The first is

'simple management', which refers to the individual management of features of the ongoing micro-level interaction. The second is 'organized management', or the management of 'language as a system' (p. 76), generally undertaken at the macro level. The former we can regard as micro-level management in discourse, whereas the latter is more similar to traditional macro/meso-level language planning. However, these two levels are not necessarily separate, and LMT explicitly emphasizes the relationship between the two:

> the relation between macro and micro is dialectical; in other words, these two dimensions of social phenomena elaborate on one another. What this means is firstly that in particular interactions the participants recognisably orient themselves towards social structures and thereby reproduce them, and secondly, that in particular interactions the participants contribute to the transformation of these structures. (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006, p. 308)

Thus, the macro and micro levels are not just seen to be related, but they actually influence one another. Another key feature of LM is its cyclical nature. In other words, the process from noting to adjustment implementation may be repeated and transformed.

10.2.3 Language management in multinationals

Although the number of studies is limited, LMT has been used in the analysis of language issues in the subsidiaries of multinational corporations, notably in Central Europe (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006; Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009). Regarding the issue of language norms, it was found that the languages of the expatriates are 'perceived as more powerful than the local languages' and there is pressure put on the local employees to acquire the expatriate languages, but not the other way around (Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009, p. 182). As a result, the language skills of local employees are often negatively evaluated and, specifically, deviations relating to language proficiency, a lack of self-assertiveness and a lack of display of misunderstanding were noted (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006; Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009).

Regarding solutions to such language problems, the financial costs of macro-level adjustments, such as the introduction of company-funded language courses and translation services, are very high (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006). However, micro-level adjustments may also be made. For example, 'rules' may be introduced in local-level interactions concerning not only which language(s) may or may not be used but *how* people should communicate, for example making it clear when one cannot understand something in a meeting. Also 'pre-interaction management' strategies, such as choosing written over oral communication, may be implemented in order to prevent potential problems, such as communication breakdown, from actually occurring (Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009).

Furthermore, Nekvapil and Nekula (2006) have shown how simple and organized management 'may be intertwined with one another dialectically' (p. 324). For example, the introduction of Czech courses for foreign employees in a German multinational was influenced by micro-level problems relating to the perceived necessity of making Czech social networks. However, the courses themselves were not successful because of the lack of importance placed on those courses within the workplace.

Yet, despite the important findings presented in the European studies of multinationals, there are no studies that look at LM occurring in multinationals elsewhere. This study will therefore attempt to redress this imbalance, by examining the management of official corporate language policy at the micro level in multinationals based in Japan.

10.3 Method

The examples used in this study come from interviews conducted with three plurilingual employees (MM, JF and CM) in specialist and/or lower-level management positions at three different European-owned multinationals based in Tokyo. MM is a Mexican male in his forties working for Swedish-owned Company A. He is a native speaker of Spanish but is fluent in English and Japanese and also speaks some French. JF is a Japanese female in her thirties working for French-owned Company B. Her first language is Japanese but she also speaks good English and Swedish and a little French. CM is a Chinese male in his thirties working for German-owned Company C. His first language is his local Chinese dialect followed by Mandarin. He also has strong Japanese and English skills and some German.

The details of the three companies can be seen in Table 10.1. In Company A, English is the official corporate language of the whole corporation and from the managerial level up the majority of business communication should be in English. Even so, the main language used with customers and between employees is the 'host language', Japanese, and some Swedish is visible in official document headings, strategy documents and product names. In addition, MM reported using Spanish, his native language, with a number of colleagues and occasionally with Spanish-speaking customers.

Table 10.1 Company profiles

	Company A	Company B	Company C
Interviewee	**MM**	**JF**	**CM**
Home country	Sweden	France	Germany
Official language(s)	English	French, English	English
Main business	Retail	Food producer	Logistics
Number of offices in Japan	7	1	280
Number of employees in Japan	>1,000	<10	>3,000

The official languages of Company B are French (dominant) and English (in international contexts). In the Tokyo branch, French is only used by some employees in communicating with the French head office and JF only uses French for greetings on the telephone, in e-mail and with visitors from overseas. On the other hand, English is the main language of communication with the head office in Paris and JF also uses English for some communication with the French branch manager. Japanese, however, is the main language of day-to-day office duties and communications with the French branch manager, with customers and other office workers.

In Company C, the official company language is English and all employees need to have good English skills in order to be hired. However, all communication with domestic customers is conducted in Japanese, as is a large part of the day-to-day communication in the branch office. Communication with the Asia-region offices is almost all conducted in English, although CM will use Mandarin with some Chinese speakers.

Two types of interviews were conducted with the employees and, in total, over seven hours of interview data were collected by the author. MM and CM's interviews were conducted in English and JF's interviews were conducted in Japanese, according to their preferences. Firstly, a semi-structured interview was conducted, focusing on the interviewees' use of language at work and general impressions of language issues in the workplace. Secondly, interaction interviews (Neustupný, 1994b, 2003) were conducted with MM and JF, focusing on the interviewees' interactions at work during the previous 24 hours in chronological order, in accordance with the guidelines outlined by Muraoka (2002) and Neustupný (2003). In this type of interview, interviewees are asked to give a detailed account of their very recent, and thus easy to recall, interactions (usually same or previous day) in 10–60 minute chronological time segments, giving details of each interaction, including participants, goals and content. Although semi-structured recall interviews can help us gain a general idea of language problems in the workplace, they often tend to be too general, the topics are restricted to what the interviewee selects to talk about, and the comments that are made are often generalized summaries of their experiences and not detailed accounts of their actual interactions (Muraoka, 2002). On the other hand, in the interaction interview, the interviewee's attention is focused on recounting the actual events that happened that day, rather than on general summaries and evaluations of experiences they think the researcher wants to hear, so the interviewee is freer to verbalize his or her feelings concerning concrete events (Neustupný, 1994b) and the interviewer has better access to the actual language behaviour that occurred, even if it is not considered important by the interviewee.

The sections that follow will show examples of how the three employees manage deviations in their daily working lives that are related to official corporate language policy. In particular, I will give examples of how language policy may be ignored or resisted, and how there may be friction over how English should be used, particularly relating to the hybridization of 'language' and 'communication rules'.

10.4 The (lack of) implementation of official language policy

Even though a multinational corporation lays down an explicit official language policy, this may be considered problematic by certain actors in the local subsidiaries, resulting in the policy being ignored or resisted.

10.4.1 Ignoring official language policy

MM gives an account of how the official language policy of his company was ignored by the Japanese branch manager:

> [Our Japanese branch manager] stressed all managers' meetings have to be done in English, and she clearly pointed out because you have to challenge yourself and you are working for a foreign company and [if] you want to be promoted you have to have that skill [of using English], but suddenly this changed and now everything is in Japanese.

In this excerpt, MM notes a deviation from the official corporate norm that all managers' meetings are supposed to be conducted in English.

The language of the meetings has changed to Japanese and, from the tone of MM's account, it is clear that he evaluates this shift in language use negatively. This negative evaluation comes from the fact that a shift in the language of meetings to Japanese constitutes 'a redefinition of what counts as valued capital' (Park, 2011, p. 445). Because of this switch, MM's role has shifted, from being a proficient lingua-franca user of English among other non-native speakers, to a less powerful non-native speaker of Japanese in a majority Japanese-native-speaker environment. Thus, the 'linguistic capital' (Bourdieu, 1991) he gained from using English has diminished through this switch to Japanese.

MM also provides an explanation for why this shift might have taken place:

> if the meeting is in English [the Japanese managers] usually don't ask questions ... if there is a chance for them to speak in Japanese then they become more open to say, even if they know, they can't speak English ... [some] don't understand the presenter if the person speaks in English.

Therefore, we can see how the Japanese branch manager's need for the Japanese staff to participate more actively in meetings has overridden the corporation's official language policy. Because of proficiency, and possibly preference, Japanese is easier for the majority of employees to communicate in, and so, in order to enable the majority to carry out their jobs more effectively, the language of meetings was changed.

If we look at this example from the perspective of the LM carried out by the Japanese branch manager, we can see how she notes that it is difficult for many members of staff to participate in meetings in English. This deviates from her expectation that employees should participate fully in meetings in order for the company to run efficiently. She then solves this problem of participation by designing and implementing the adjustment of changing the language of the meetings to Japanese so that the majority of employees can participate more effectively. In contrast to MM's case, when the official policy of conducting meetings in English is carried out the Japanese employees cannot fully participate and hence, similar to Vaara et al.'s (2005) findings, the language resources of the local majority are devalued. By switching the language to Japanese, however, the Japanese majority's native-language skills are given added value.

In this example, we can clearly see that the Japanese branch manager is a 'key actor' (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2012) in deciding whether or not the use of the official corporate language will be implemented at the local level. It is her individual decision that enables the language needs of the Japanese majority to override the policy directives from head office.

10.4.2 Resisting official language policy

Official language policy may also be actively resisted, rather than simply ignored. The following excerpt is taken from JF's interview where she recounts a conversation she had with a French senior manager from the French head office:

> I was told ... 'You should improve your French', ... it had a real impact on me. 'Oh, so it's like I have to learn French because of course it's a French company'... I felt a difference of power between people who can speak French and those who can't. English isn't the problem. She can of course speak English but it feels as if it's just temporary. She's only using English because I can't speak French. I felt that she was thinking that when I can speak French, I should use French ... But I really don't think I'm going to learn French so that I can use it for business, I don't think it's necessary either ... Rather than [French] I think it's better to learn more about something like marketing. (Author's translation of Japanese interview)

In this example, we can see JF being pressured to improve her proficiency in the official corporate home language, French. The senior French manager is upholding the norm that employees of Company B should be highly proficient in French because, although a multinational, the company is a French company and the French language plays a symbolic role in its identity. If we look at the LM that the French manager undertakes, we can see that JF's low level of French deviates from the company norm that employees should speak business-level French, presumably if they want to do well in the company. She evaluates JF's language proficiency negatively and makes an adjustment by telling JF explicitly to improve her French.

On the other hand, being told to improve her French constitutes a deviation for JF. Based on her experiences in the Japanese branch office, she knows that English, Japanese and a few French greetings are enough in the local context and that, in practice, French is unnecessary. She evaluates this deviation negatively and highlights the fact that this is not an issue of communication, because all the senior French management can easily communicate in English, but one of ideology and, to use her words, 'power'. JF makes an adjustment towards this deviation by actively making the decision *not* to learn French. As her final comment illustrates, in the local context at least, it makes more sense for her to spend her time studying something more useful like marketing.

JF is able to resist pressure from the French head office to improve her French, firstly, because of her distance, both geographically and psychologically, from the French head office. Her daily working life is supervised by her local French manager and, although he communicates with the French head office in French, he does not enforce the company's French policy in the local office. Rather, according to JF, he puts priority on making money for the company and so hires staff who will be good at working within the Japanese market, and so takes on the main role of liaising with the French head office in French himself. So again, we can see how the agency of the local branch managers affects how far the corporate language policy will be enforced.

Furthermore, even though JF receives comments about her language proficiency, head office itself is not actually enforcing this policy. It would take many hours of study and considerable financial investment to raise JF's very basic French skills to a level where she would be able to conduct business in French and, crucially, Company B is not intending to pay for this. Company B may ideally like all of its overseas employees to have high-level French but, in reality, it appears that their main priority lies in making money in the lucrative Japanese market. This situation is different from the cases reported in Central Europe, where multinationals spend a great deal of money on translation and language study support (Nekvapil and Nekula, 2006). In contrast, the Japanese cases in both Company A and Company B seem to exemplify the 'neoliberal workplace', where 'the worker [rather than the company: LF] is expected to carry the burden of endless self-development, including the continuous improvement of linguistic skills' (Park, 2011, p. 445). Nevertheless, the head office really cannot force the issue if there are no serious communication problems between the branch and head office and money is being made.

10.4.3 The macro–micro connection

From the two examples above, it is possible to see a dialectical relationship between the macro/meso and micro levels. When the company's official language policy is not enforced on the micro level, the company head offices do not change their official policies but they do *acquiesce*. In other words, their lack of policy enforcement enables local deviations from official policy to continue. Therefore, a *lack* of LM by the head office, particularly the implementation of adjustments to enforce official language policy, leads to the creation of new local norms, such as 'we can get away with using another language', that are promoted by the local branch managers. This supports Peltokorpi and Vaara's (2012) findings that, firstly, local language practices result from the 'interplay of HQ strategies and local responses' and, secondly, that 'key actors' in the local context, here the branch managers, play a central role in the implementation of policy (p. 825). Thus, although events on the micro level do not change the corporation's official language policy, they do enable new local norms to be created, highlighting the high level of flexibility surrounding the implementation of language policy, particularly if it does not affect the general running of the business.

10.5 The hybridization of 'language' and 'communication' rules

Peltokorpi and Vaara (2012) point out the 'hybrid nature of language practices' in Japanese multinationals. Similarly, the interviews in this study show that it is not just *which* language should be used, but *how* each language is expected to be used that is problematized in the Japanese workplace. As Hymes (1972, p. 54) has claimed, we share 'rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech', and as Neustupný (2004) has argued, we do not just need linguistic knowledge to communicate effectively, we also need what he terms 'non-grammatical communicative competence' (p. 6). For example, the way we agree on which topics should be talked about, to whom and how politeness should be displayed, to whom we should be direct and indirect, how much we should say and how we should organize our talk, are influenced by the communities of practice to which we belong. However, these 'rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech' are often subconscious and do not necessarily change when the base linguistic code is switched. Thus, we can have a situation where one linguistic code, for example English, is used as the base, but where the 'rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech' derive from a completely different communication system, in this case, Japanese.

In the following example, MM explains an incident where a Turkish colleague's communication in English with the Swedish CEO of Japan operations, was frowned upon by other Japanese staff members. The setting was an 'open meeting' where employees were told they could address their concerns to the CEO:

> [one Turkish employee] was very direct asking questions and I think some [Japanese] people didn't like that ... I heard [from them later that] his questions were very direct, were, all questions was 'I think that, I believe that if we have like an online shopping service the company will make more profit. Why don't we have that?'... I realized at that time only the Japanese [were] very shocked about his questions ... [they had] surprised facial expressions.

We can infer from this excerpt that, from the Japanese employees' perspective, the Turkish employee's comments were interpreted as a challenge to the Swedish CEO. Even though English was used and the CEO was non-Japanese, the Japanese employees' facial reactions imply that they expected the Turkish employee to respect the hierarchy and not threaten the Swedish CEO's face by challenging him directly in a public forum. The Turkish employee's questions, therefore, deviated from their expectations because he did not consider his own position within the company hierarchy and his questions did not show deference to the CEO, as most Japanese employees would expect. MM's Japanese colleagues' facial expressions displayed their negative evaluation. Although no adjustment plans appear to have been implemented to tackle the Turkish employee's deviation directly, his Japanese colleagues were gossiping about this amongst themselves and to MM, and by doing so, were strengthening the awareness that this behaviour was deviant.

On the other hand, MM notes as a deviation the pressure from Japanese employees to communicate indirectly, or not at all, even when they are speaking English to someone non-Japanese. This pressure deviates firstly from the explicit company norms, mentioned in the in-house training literature, that Company A is a 'flat organization' or, in other words, that it has a weak hierarchy that places emphasis on 'clarity in communication'. It also deviates from MM's individual norm that, if you use English, particularly to someone non-Japanese, you should also be able to apply the communication rules of non-Japanese speech communities. From MM's tone of voice, and his use of the expression 'only the Japanese [were] very shocked', it can be inferred that MM evaluated this deviation rather negatively. However, no visible adjustment plan is designed and implemented, save for his probable raised awareness that, when using English, he should be careful to use a more indirect style of communication.

In this example, we can see the conflicting interests of different groups on the local micro level and their different LM processes. We can see a covert struggle between non-Japanese employees, such as MM and presumably the Turkish employee on the one hand, who *want* the official corporate policy, emphasizing weak hierarchy and clear communication, to be enforced, and, on the other hand, some Japanese employees, who consciously or subconsciously, are pressuring non-Japanese employees to conform to Japanese 'communication rules', even though the base language used is English.

MM gives a further example of a manager from Singapore who was 'asked to leave the company'. MM explains that the trigger for her dismissal was her plan to organize a meeting on an important retail day, but MM argues that it was her way of communicating that was the real reason behind her dismissal:

> I think [the Japanese managers] just didn't like her ... She was very, very direct in the way of communicating, and saying 'No, I don't think how this is good' ... maybe she was a bit rough sometimes ... So she sometimes said 'OK just get it done!', 'Oh I'm going to tell this guy he's not performing well!' and [she] went and ask this guy, 'You are not doing anything, why are you taking so much time doing this?', kind of ... [She] was doing the same to [the branch manager] and another [higher-ranked] people.

MM claims that it was the Singaporean manager's way of communicating too directly, particularly to people of higher rank, which cost her her job. Although she was speaking in English, she had been repeatedly deviating from the Japanese norm of indirectness in certain contexts, particularly regarding the criticism of other managers. Although the catalyst for her dismissal was the meeting that she had scheduled for an inappropriate time, according to MM, it was the accumulation of negative evaluations (Fairbrother, 1999; Muraoka, 2000) concerning her directness that was the real cause of the problem. So again we can see pressure from the Japanese majority to hybridize English with Japanese 'communication rules'.

When asked about his own experiences and impressions of the Singaporean manager, however, MM's interpretation of her directness was very different:

> We had a very good relation, actually. She XX[1] lot of advices and saying 'maybe you have to do this, and this', and 'if you make a presentation maybe let's focus on this', and 'maybe you want to get this case fast by all this XX meeting' or whatever 'please do' and so [she] was, is more kind of positive, yeah constructive.

Therefore, we can see that there can be various interpretations of the same language-related phenomena. Although the Japanese managers

felt that the Singaporean manager's way of using English was too direct, MM actually evaluated her way of giving criticism positively, as 'positive' and 'constructive'.

This hybridization of 'language' and 'communication rules' from two different systems seems to cause friction because it manifests itself as covert, unwritten rules, held by the majority, that appear to carry considerable power in determining career success in the local context, thus illustrating one aspect of what Peltokorpi and Vaara refer to as the 'pervasive power implications of language policies and practices' (p. 825). Having an English language policy may also hold some dangers for non-Japanese employees, who may unwittingly assume that use of the English language also permits a communication style similar to that used in English-speaking countries. Instead, a more hybridized Japanese style of English communication, such as displaying respect and restraint towards those higher up in the hierarchy and avoiding open directness in certain contexts, may be preferred by the local Japanese majority.

Furthermore, some of those majority Japanese speakers will be in gatekeeping positions, and so being able to present a positive impression to one's Japanese superiors via communication may rely on good knowledge of Japanese 'communication rules' rather than merely English grammar and vocabulary. This also supports Amelina's (2010) claims that the host-country language, in this case Japanese, and particularly Japanese 'communication rules', may be 'used as an instrument of power imposition and exclusion' (p. 251).

10.6 Acknowledging the distinction between 'language' and 'communication' skills

Recognition of the difference between 'language' and 'communication' skills does not always have to cause friction, however. In fact, local managers can be aware of these differences and actually recognize and make use of the fact that employees with not just English skills but also particular communication skills can be useful in communicating with the overseas regional offices. In the following excerpt CM explains how Company C has designated him as the key communicator with the Asia-region head office:

> none of these languages I use is my native language right, so express what you want, what you want to see, that's okay that's a basic point but besides this, how you speak to make people work with you easy to accept you, so this is sometimes a little bit of technique, such as

> I never use 'I' in the mail, I always use 'we' right, because you know, I don't know, because we try to make people to we are same destination, we try to you know from your words try to people to want to work with you, that's our thinks, right, it's not only, you know if you sense: 'I want to do this here tomorrow', 'we would like to do', 'we expect to finish to your tomorrow'; so maybe not so direct, a little bit polite, maybe people would be easy to accept, so basically now if they have something to discuss with the region team they will ask me to do, I don't know why, just I have no troubles ... because I don't know, just they didn't delay my requirement, I ask them to do something and they always try to help.

Even though CM's English-language skills are by no means perfect, he explains how he uses 'techniques', when writing in English, such as using the word 'we' rather than 'I', and tries to communicate in a 'not so direct, a little bit polite' way, so that other people will 'want to work with you'. The senior Japanese managers at Company C have noted that when CM communicates with the regional team things go more smoothly than if his Japanese colleagues do the communication work, so as a result he has been designated the key person in charge of communicating the branch's requests to the regional head office, because he 'has no troubles' and if he makes a request to them 'they always try to help'.

Designating CM as the key communicator can be seen as one example of 'pre-interaction management' (Nekvapil and Sherman, 2009) on the part of CM's Japanese managers. For the sake of getting the job done efficiently, they recognize the need for smooth communication with the regional head office, and although CM does not have the highest-level English skills, they have noted that his communication style is more effective in getting their requests met. CM is therefore designated as the key communicator to avoid delays and other communication problems. In other words, they recognize that by having CM handle the communication they can prevent potential deviations from occurring.

10.7 Conclusions

As the examples in this chapter illustrate, the implementation of the official corporate language(s) may cause friction mainly because of three factors. Firstly, enforcing, or not enforcing, the policy, results in the devaluation of certain employees' language skills, thus negatively affecting their status at work or their ability to carry out their work

effectively. Secondly, there may be friction when official policy does not reflect the actual linguistic resources needed on the micro level in the local context. As was shown in the example of Company B, even though French might be the corporation's official language, if it is not actually needed by the employees in order to accomplish their work duties then it may be completely ignored.

Finally, even though a particular official corporate language might be employed, the 'communication rules' that determine *how* the language will be used, may derive from a completely different system, resulting in consequences for those employees unfamiliar with these other very powerful, covert, local norms. As the examples here have shown, not knowing how to hybridize English to suit the local context can result in alienation from other employees and even the loss of employment. On the other hand, the ability of certain employees to use English in a non-Japanese communicative style that results in the local branch office being able to negotiate more effectively with the regional head office, may be valued and exploited by the local management.

Regarding LMT, and particularly, the connection between macro/meso- and micro-level policy, we can see that local branch managers are clearly 'key actors' (Peltokorpi and Vaara, 2012) in determining whether, or to what extent, corporate policy will be implemented on the local level. In fact, through the initiatives of local managers, new local norms may be formed that conflict with the official corporate policy. Consequently, we can see a definite weakening of the official language policy, encouraged by the corporation's central management's lack of policy enforcement. This does not lead to the formation of completely new macro/meso-level norms within the whole corporation, but it does show how multinationals will tolerate non-compliance with language policy, leading to the subsequent weakening of those very norms.

Furthermore, LM on the micro level takes various forms and there may be conflicting norms and interests between different groups of employees depending on their status, language skills and background. Therefore, it is important to stress that there is not just *one* homogeneous micro level and that the problems noted by one group may not be noted by all. We, therefore, need to look at the LM processes of different employees at different levels in the corporate hierarchy, in order to grasp a fuller picture of the impact of language policy on the micro level.

Finally, in contrast with Nekvapil and Sherman's (2009) findings, in this study the language norms of the expatriates do not necessarily seem to be more powerful than the local languages. They may be important for the top jobs but for those involved in lower-level positions, local Japanese norms of language use may be equally or more powerful, as was also the case with German in Amelina's (2010) study. Therefore, although small in scope, this study illustrates how microlinguistic studies can be of great value in highlighting the relationship between the micro and macro/meso levels of language planning, particularly regarding the implementation of policy and the negotiation of underlying norms. Micro-level studies enable us to see the actual results of planning on the micro level and whether policy is actually being implemented. In addition, they can show us the dialogical nature of language policy and how pressure from the micro level can affect macro/meso-level policy.

Note

1. Inaudible segment.

References

Amelina, M. (2010) 'Do other languages than English matter?: International career development of highly-qualified professionals' in B. Meyer and B. Apfelbaum (eds) *Multilingualism at Work: From policies to practices in public, medical and business settings* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins).

Bourdieu, P. (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power* (Oxford: Polity).

Fairbrother, L. (1999) 'The management of cultural deviations in contact situations'. Unpublished MA dissertation, Chiba University, Chiba.

Hymes, D. (1972) 'Models of the interaction of language and social life' in J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds) *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston).

Jernudd, B. (2010) 'Review of the book *Language Management* by Bernard Spolsky', *Current Issues in Language Planning,* 11 (1), 83–9.

Jernudd, B. H. and Neustupný, J. V. (1987) 'Language planning: For whom?' in L. Laforge (ed.) *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Language Planning* (Quebec: Les Presses de L'Université Laval).

Lüdi, G., Höchle, K. and Yanaprasart, P. (2010) 'Plurilingual practices at multilingual workplaces' in B. Meyer and B. Apfelbaum (eds) *Multilingualism at Work: From policies to practices in public, medical and business settings* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins).

Marschan-Piekkari, R., Welch, D. and Welch, L. (1999) 'In the shadow: The impact of language on structure, power and communication in the multinational', *International Business Review,* 8 (4), 421–40.

Muraoka, H. (2000) 'Management of intercultural input: A case study of two Korean residents in Japan', *The Journal of Asian Pacific Communication,* 10 (2), 297–311.

Muraoka, H. (2002) 'Shitsumonchōsa: Intabyū to Ankēto' [Question Surveys: Interviews and Questionnaires] in J. V. Neustupný and S. Miyazaki (eds) *Gengo Kenkyū no Hōhō* [Methods in Language Research] (Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan).

Nekvapil, J. (2009) 'The integrative potential of language management theory' in J. Nekvapil and T. Sherman (eds) *Language Management in Contact Situations: Perspectives from three continents* (Frankfurt a. Main: Peter Lang).

Nekvapil, J. and Nekula, M. (2006) 'On language management in multinational companies in the Czech Republic', *Current Issues in Language Planning,* 7 (2) and 7 (3), 307–27.

Nekvapil, J. and Sherman, T. (2009) 'Pre-interaction management in multinational companies in Central Europe', *Current Issues in Language Planning,* 10 (2), 181–98.

Neustupný, J. V. (1985) 'Problems in Australian–Japanese contact situations' in J. B. Pride (ed.) *Cross-Cultural Encounters: Communication and miscommunication* (Melbourne: River Seine).

Neustupný, J. V. (1994a) 'Problems of English contact discourse and language planning' in T. Kandiah and J. Kwan-Terry (eds) *English and Language Planning: A Southeast Asian contribution* (Singapore: Academic Press).

Neustupný, J. V. (1994b) 'Nihon Kenkyū no Hōhōron: Dētā Shūshū no Dankai' [A Methodology for Japanese Studies: The data collection stage], *Machikaneyama Ronsō: Nihongogakuhen,* 28, 1–24.

Neustupný, J. V. (2003) 'Japanese students in Prague. Problems of communication and interaction', *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language,* 162, 125–43.

Neustupný, J. V. (2004) 'A theory of contact situations and the study of academic interaction', *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication,* 14 (1), 3–31.

Park, J. S. (2011) 'The promise of English: Linguistic capital and the neoliberal worker in the South Korean job market', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism,* 14 (4), 443–55.

Peltokorpi, V. and Vaara, E. (2012) 'Language policies and practices in wholly owned foreign subsidiaries: A recontextualization perspective', *Journal of International Business Studies,* 43, 808–33.

Roberts, C. (2010) 'Language socialization in the workplace', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics,* 30, 211–27.

Spolsky, B. (2009) *Language Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Vaara, E., Tienari, J., Piekkari, R. and Santti, R. (2005) 'Language and the circuits of power in a merging multinational corporation', *Journal of Management Studies,* 42 (3), 595–623.

Language Planning and Microlinguistics

From Policy to Interaction and Vice Versa

Edited by

Winifred V. Davies
Aberystwyth University, UK

and

Evelyn Ziegler
University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany

palgrave
macmillan

Selection, introduction, conclusion and editorial matter © Winifred V. Davies and Evelyn Ziegler 2015
Individual chapters © Respective authors 2015

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978–1–137–36123–3

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Language planning and microlinguistics: from policy to interaction and vice versa / edited by Winifred V. Davies, Evelyn Ziegler.
pages cm
ISBN 978–1–137–36123–3 (hardback)
1. Language planning. 2. Language and languages—Standardization.
3. Language policy. 4. Applied linguistics—Political aspects. 5. Interaction analysis in education. 6. Sociolinguistics. I. Davies, W. V. (Winifred V.) editor.
II. Ziegler, Evelyn, – editor.
P40.5.L35L27 2015
306.44'9—dc23 2014050065

Typeset by MPS Limited, Chennai, India.

Contents