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Author(s): Björn H. Jernudd

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Planning language treatment: linguistics for the third world¹

BJÖRN H. JERNUDD

Culture Learning Institute, East-West Center

ABSTRACT

I shall argue that adoption of linguistics at institutions of higher learning in its present international disciplinary form, and in its expression through the medium of English (because English is a major foreign or second language in much of the world and the by far dominant language for the discipline of linguistics), can be contrary to the public good in less developed countries (LDCs) and emerging speech communities. Linguistics in its current international disciplinary form serves needs different from those of emerging speech communities, where a new language treatment system ought to be created by a new cadre of caretakers of the community's language resources. (Language planning; developing countries; linguistics as an international discipline; English)

The developed nations' speech communities are on the whole stable speech communities. They have a diffracted, various institutional structure of language treatment (Jernudd 1977a: 45-48; Neustupný 1978: Chapter XIV). The discipline of linguistics² takes its specialized place in that structure and makes its highly abstract contribution perhaps mainly by providing a theory to explain utterances and by providing grammars as tools of description of utterances (Hymes 1974: 92-93, 203-04). When emerging speech communities develop treatment systems, disciplinary linguistics (from here on: linguistics) may not at first be the most appropriate basis. Today's linguistics is not equipped to help solve language problems that accompany accelerating communicative exchange toward modernization and to help develop language treatment systems in the LDCs (Jernudd 1977d: 61-62, 67-70).

Nevertheless, linguistics is imported into emerging speech communities. It is imported because it is an internationally visible, modern approach to the study of language (and that not the least because it is available through the medium of English), and because the new countries' universities model themselves on Western counterparts, be it by gift of historical circumstance alone or by deliberate importation (Mazrui *n.d.*: 9-13).

The kind of training and expertise that is sometimes considered appropriate for handling language problems in emerging speech communities is sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, applied linguistic, or even mainstream linguistic (cf. the "paradigm for meeting language development goals" as quoted in Fox 1975:

107). But linguistics as practiced at many centers of study and learning where there are students from LDCs deals mainly with issues other than language problems of emerging speech communities (Austerlitz 1975; Center for Applied Linguistics 1972; Dingwall 1971; Ferguson 1975; see also introductory linguistics textbooks). Today's mainstream linguists stress in particular one aspect of the study of language as the focus of the discipline, namely formal properties of languages as defined by their method.³ People outside linguistics, in both emerging and stable speech communities, however, focus their attention on language as it is used, on successes and failures of language teaching, on the meanings of words, on cultural and political issues of language, on language history, on language reform, and so on (Jernudd 1977c; Jernudd & Garrison 1975: 108–26; Neustupný 1978: 264; the questions and answers in *Nyt fra Sprognaevnet* and *Språkvård*; cf. also Rabin 1971).

The inappropriateness of current linguistics is clearly demonstrated by the fact that in many countries, professional recruitment for language treatment takes place outside linguistics (Jernudd 1977b; Jernudd & Garrison 1975: 38–62; cf. also, although from another perspective, Das Gupta [1978] on the organizational dimensions of language planning in India, e.g., ‘a system of language planning that was . . . scarcely evaluated in terms of linguistics . . . criteria’ [p. 77]). For instance, linguistics is marginal to cultivation of language or language teaching practice and research (cf. review articles in *Language Teaching & Linguistics: Abstracts*, among them Roulet 1976). In the stable speech communities in Europe, language problems of immigrants and ethnic minorities, of contemporary dialect, of professional expression, and of bureaucratic or plain language hardly move linguistics, although linguists can very well be individually engaged in precisely these issues. And issues such as translation (cf. Newmark 1976), interpretation, and language of textbooks fall largely outside linguistics.

For language teaching, recruitment and organization of professional discussion are essentially handled by foreign languages departments, teacher training colleges, pedagogical research institutions, teachers' associations, and educational commissions and bureaus. Problems of trade names, personal names, and geographical names are handled by special commissions or government agencies; native-language departments give basic training to these specialists. Personnel for agencies of cultivation of language (advice to the public) are recruited from native-language departments, but a key element in training is the apprenticeship at agencies of language cultivation. Cultivation of terminology lacks structured training programs, but the study of technical subjects, of documentation and information sciences, and even of classical languages or philological subjects provides basic training for recruitment. Native-language teaching and research live their own life, freely borrowing from linguistics, literary theory, communication, and other subjects. Equivalent institutions are needed in emerging speech communities. It is not sufficient to rely on linguistics. Allocating scarce resources to import and develop linguistics could block these other necessary

developments toward a well-formed treatment system or could even impede the restructuring of already available institutions for support of native languages.

There is an unfortunate tendency to pit linguistics against native-language study in international or local academic settings. The descriptive and historical (and often explanatory diachronic) excellence of European, Arabic, or Indian traditions of language study and treatment (Jernudd 1977a) is anchored in native-language teaching and in normative services to users of native languages, in stylistic judgment, and in the teaching of practical competence in native languages. Linguistics, which is a Western creation (Robins 1967), threatens the respect for, excellence in, and sensitivity of native-language study in the LDCs because of the effects on the indigenous system of importation of "modern," "international" linguistics from "developed" countries. The study of Arabic grammar, for instance, may have grown stale, perhaps even become petrified into rather old-fashioned ideals even by standards of conservative judgment. But the introduction of a seemingly more adequate understanding of grammatical principles and their application to description of varieties of Arabic has on occasion led to oversimplification of the relationships between the classical norm of Arabic, on the one hand, and the variability in spoken Arabic, on the other, and, because of belief in the primacy of spoken language (as a consequence of methodological prescription in modern linguistic description) to unrealistic devaluation of the received norm and exaggerated calls for reform (Hurreiz 1975; Kaye 1972; al-Toma 1970: 693; Khubchandani 1973).

With modern methods come claims that their practitioners' performance is superior to that of traditionally trained language specialists. Such claims are not based on the value of the linguists' contribution to the speech community but are a result of the high value placed on importated ideas and the desire to emulate at home methods that have succeeded abroad. The traditionally stable support structure for native languages is threatened, and the consequences could be linguistic uncertainty, academic conflict, and uncertainties in pedagogical method for teaching the native languages in school.

Native-language departments in northern Europe have not been disrupted by such unsettling importation. They now deal with the description of native languages, their phonetics, syntax, semantics, and sociolinguistics, as well as literature, drama, and film. University handbooks specify courses such as those described below.

A course in the study of sound and oral presentation:

History and typology of linguistics. General and Swedish phonetics, the inventory of sounds and phonetic system of the national, standard language; regional, social, and stylistic variations in pronunciation of the national, standard language, characteristic dialectal sounds. Phonetic notation. Relationship between the sound system and spelling of Swedish. Normation of pronunciation and evaluation of variants of pronunciation. Exercises in selected kinds of

oral presentation, e.g., stories . . . demonstrations, reports . . . interviews, discussions . . . and training in critical evaluation thereof. Reading aloud. Fundamentals of verse. Voice and speech therapy with voice analysis. (*Normalstudieplan 1970: AC1*, course 6; author's translation)

A course in modern Swedish stylistics and written presentation:

Modern Swedish vocabulary and phraseology; dictionaries (wordbooks) and wordlists. Theory of style (impressionistic, quantitative and functional analysis of style, etc.) Development of language and style since 1880. Principles of cultivation of language and their application. Handbooks of correctness of language. Correctness of spelling and punctuation. Inter-Nordic language cultivation. Exercises in production and critical evaluation of varying kinds of written language, e.g., descriptions, instructions, accounts, reports . . . reviews, translations. (*Normalstudieplan 1970: AC1*, course 8; author's translation)

A course in semantics and lexicography:

Description of meaning according to different methods. Differences of semantic structure of languages. Language and perception of reality. Semantic analysis in wordbooks. Swedish and Nordic wordbooks, their purposes, editing and use. Besides study of wordbooks this course is strongly linguistically oriented but should be directed as much as possible toward Swedish materials. (*Normalstudieplan 1970: D2*, course 1/2 b; author's translation)

A course in modern Swedish stylistics:

Theory of style, means, forms. Problems of evaluation: functional worth of styles, measurement of readability, questions of cultivation and correctness of language; kinds of prose, "good" and "bad" style, etc. . . . Styles of spoken language, e.g., on the basis of transcriptions of tape-recorded speech from the media. (*Normalstudieplan 1970: D2*, course 1/2 c; author's translation)

A course in name research:

Grammatical and semantic properties of proper names. Principles of name formation. Different kinds of names (personal, place, institution, company, merchandise, etc.). The oldest Nordic personal names and principles of their formation. Personal names borrowed from other languages. (*Normalstudieplan 1970: D2*, course 1/2 f; author's translation)

A recent proposal for reform of the curriculum for training teachers of Swedish in the comprehensive school in Sweden includes study of

conditions for communication in society, including, among other subjects, theory of public participation in government ("offentlighetsteori") with regard to economic conditions and power structure in society, politics of lan-

guage, theory of correct language, cultivation of language, sociology of language, sociology of literature, language interaction; basic language analysis (grammar, word formation, semantics, persuasion by language use) and the study of language and cognitive development, etc. (*Svenskläraren* 23, 4, 31 [1978])

Linguistics does not deal with these issues, although some of the topics are necessarily dependent on linguistic theory. In the stable Western speech communities there are native-language departments and native-language curricula in teacher training colleges for teachers of the national school systems (the media of instruction for which are as a matter of course the national, indigenous languages). This makes possible in these countries a discipline of linguistics to deal with basic research on language (and perhaps on "exotic" languages). *Introduction of native-language departments to support indigenous language use through the study of history and current functions is essential to the development of emerging speech communities in the new nations.*

Linguistics cannot take the place of agencies and institutions for native-language development, although linguistics can possibly be made to accommodate some concerns of emerging speech communities, particularly at the early stages of language development (grammatical definition, orthography, spelling), and already established linguistics departments could individually adapt in that direction, as some have indeed done.

Indigenous approaches to language study are normally and naturally expressed through the language or languages of the respective speech community, for instance in Swedish, Japanese, Arabic, Bengali, Tahitian, and German. But across national or regional boundaries, what is not communicated in English or French is only with the greatest difficulty perceived in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, in the Middle East, and perhaps in large parts of Asia (cf. Mazrui 1975: 193). Therefore, linguistics is visible and is more easily available throughout the world than other approaches to the study and treatment of language. Moreover, some Western countries have a quite natural and perhaps legitimate self-interest in the position of English and French in LDCs in both the past and the present (cf., for the United Kingdom, British Council *Annual Report* 1974/75: 22-23, 1976/77: 28 and its Royal Charter of 1940; and for French, cf. Calvet 1974). These countries have a strong linguistics establishment. Those aspects of linguistics that address problems of, say, maintenance and further spread of English (i.e., aspects related to the teaching of English and the sociolinguistics of English vis à vis indigenous languages) find stronger support in these countries (Fox 1974: 13-16, 1975: volume 2).

There is also an individual dimension to the LDCs' dependency on Western models and language interests. The fact that scholars from LDCs are judged by standards appropriate to academics who specialize in linguistics in one particular type of speech community (the modern, stable one) severely constrains indi-

vidual work (Kumar 1979: 110–11). The responsibility for removing this imposition rests equally on the international community of scholars and on each individual. To the extent that scholars are concerned about their own advancement, about getting finance for research, about attracting students, about finding time for professional self-development, and about increasing their income and influence, the responsibility is theirs; individual scholars must make up their own minds. For the established scholar, recognition results from publication (in some journals more than others and by some publishing companies more than others), invitations to meetings, memberships in societies, memberships on boards of editors, reviews by specific people in specific settings of disciplinary power, in brief, from belonging to and being evaluated within the academic community and, beyond that, within a given discipline. Biases in linguistics are quite transparent concerning what kind of problems it rewards attention to; opinion about *the* training patterns and schools is ever changing and ever present; *the* journals can probably be named with considerable consensus. These biases are Western biases. Scholars must find individual solutions to the dilemma of making their work relevant to the speech communities in which they live or to which they give most of their attention, thus running the risk of isolating themselves from the international discipline and perhaps from a predictable career.⁴

A theory of language treatment and an academic discipline to accompany it does not yet exist. This makes an individual choice in support of an indigenous treatment system difficult for yet other reasons. The English-speaking nations' (often laudable) support of LDCs through grants and aid programs, the (quite unavoidable) use of English by expatriate experts and visiting scholars, and the fact that English is the most used language of international enterprise, scholarly networks, international business and politics continue to channel and entice a language student's or language scholar's choice as to direction of study and even place of study into English language or literature subjects in English-speaking countries or into linguistics (Mazrui 1975: 194).

Although, as Mazrui says, the English language was an important causal factor in the growth of African national consciousness (Mazrui 1975: 48, 53) and much resistance to foreign rule in Anglophone Africa was born when nationalist leaders were studying in the United Kingdom and the United States, such transfer of ideology will not fortuitously occur for language study. The English department in the Anglo-American academic world caps a language treatment system for English in which public institutions play only a very minor role in the cultivation of native languages. Native speakers of English do find support within their speech communities, but the treatment system has little academic recognition, and national organizational relationships within it are weak (Heath 1976: 9–10, 36–38; Rubin 1976, 1978). There is little to transfer.

Moreover, the Anglo-American English department differs from both the native-language department in Europe (or the Arabic-department in an Arab country) and the foreign-language department anywhere. Even taking into ac-

count the speech department in the United States, the Anglo-American academic approach to the national language is quite narrow in range compared with that of a native-language department in a Continental European country. The Anglo-American departments emphasize literature and the media; they instill in students a basic proficiency in oral and written English, and in language study they either take a linguistic approach or engage in historical, philological study of texts (see university catalogs). Peculiarly, this Anglo-American type of English department appears also to be the type found in many LDCs, perhaps supplemented by an "English Language Institute" to instill English proficiency. The Continental native-language department, as we have seen, not only covers a wider range of topics relevant to the use and growth of national languages but gives explicit attention even to the organization and history of treatment of the native language. Therefore, these countries can afford also to maintain specialists in linguistics with an appropriate place in the overall system of language correction.

In practice, the task of internationalizing linguistics to overcome Anglo-American domination is quite a difficult one, but if language treatment is recognized by journals, meetings, curricula, bibliographies, and for research jobs within linguistics, then this would perhaps motivate scholars from a wider range of speech communities to tap their communities' experience and communicate it beyond their native language boundaries through English as the international and major language of the discipline. But unless scholars write and submit to linguistics journals articles on language treatment, unless they offer papers at conferences, develop courses, and undertake research on language treatment, representatives of the discipline will have no reason to take notice.

In building language-treatment expertise in emerging speech communities the following practical suggestions might be considered. It may be possible to encourage national language academies (boards, committees) or terminological agencies to receive students by special arrangement for training, apprenticeships, or study tours (for a listing of language planning organizations in the world, see Rubin 1979). Some European countries may have the resources to respond to requests for training or visiting by offering scholarships and fellowships, also for periods of study or observation and discussion at native-language departments. Academic legitimacy could be conferred on these arrangements in cooperation with national university systems.

Another suggestion (which may be less attractive at present to a student planning a career on the basis of an "overseas degree") lends direct support to the home institution and focuses on local problems: instead of sending students abroad, the local school could hire or borrow people from abroad on its own terms and if necessary on the donor's financial terms. At the very least, universities that offer scholarships and jobs on return ought not to let their students go abroad without review to wherever they can gain admission. Home and host universities need to communicate in some detail about appropriateness and depth of study programs. Scholarly organizations, philanthropic and cultural agencies,

individual professors and researchers, and returnees could be useful brokers and should assume active roles in bringing about optimal placements of students planning to depart for studies abroad.

The language barrier to sharing experience among practitioners in language treatment, especially in language planning, needs to be overcome. An international academic network in language treatment ought to make such exchange of experience between practitioners one of its major tasks, a task that at the same time benefits theory and model-building and counters geographical or linguistic biases that might otherwise overwhelm a growing academic field. The *Language Planning Newsletter* is a promising start.

Further, perhaps universities in emerging speech communities could consider not accepting aid (or business contracts) for English teaching unless some aid is also offered for developing indigenous languages or for developing the national language treatment system. Modernization needs to be "domesticated," says Mazrui; in order to break out of dependency, new nations must "bid to relate it /modernity/ more firmly to local culture and economic needs" (Mazrui n.d.: 13). This implies a circumscription of domestic use of English that cannot be accomplished by decree. Development of native languages, however agonizingly difficult, is fundamental to containing English.

The full development of local, national, and regional languages may reciprocally liberate English for use as a truly international language, a role that today is tarnished by the misuse of English to prevent the economic, sociopolitical, and cultural advancement of those who do not possess it.

NOTES

1. I have benefited from comments by Karl-Hampus Dahlstedt (Umeå, Sweden), Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim (Amman, Jordan), Einar Selander (Stockholm, Sweden), Mary Slaughter (Honolulu, Hawaii), and Erik Sundström (Stockholm) and from discussions with Jiří V. Neustupný.
2. By linguistics in its disciplinary form I mean the discipline as reflected in the journals and conference programs of the larger linguistic societies, the contents of many international journals, the curricula of large or well-known linguistics departments particularly in the United States (Center for Applied Linguistics 1972), in the United Kingdom, and to some extent in Continental Europe, and in the research topics that attract the most students (equivalent to Neustupný's paradigmatic linguistics [1978: 12]).
3. The possibility that models of language and methods in linguistics are determined by communicative styles of literate society poses a further problem that is not explored in this paper (cf. Neustupný 1978: 255).
4. These problems exist *within* developed nations with regard to subordinated languages and varieties, such as those of American Indians, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and others.

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