Language Planning:
Current Issues and Research

Joan Rubin
Roger Shuy

Editors

Georgetown University School of Languages and Linguistics

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CONTENTS

LANGUAGE PLANNING
AS A TYPE OF LANGUAGE TREATMENT[1]

BJÖRN H. JERNUDD

Monash University

Why and when do language problems appear in speech communities? What language problems justify planning? When do requests for planning of aspects of language appear? Answers to such questions do not depend on our definition of planning--but we will be in a better position to describe and understand the activities subsumed by these questions if we adhere to one particular definition of planning. The following nominal definition has been suggested by Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971:196):

> [We define language planning] as a political and administrative activity for solving language problems . . . In a national community, the role of conscious superordination of the major interdependent social sectors belongs to the political authority. The broadest authorization for planning is obtained from the politicians. A body of experts is then specifically delegated the task of preparing a plan. In preparing this, the experts ideally estimate existing resources and forecast . . . Once targets are agreed upon, a strategy of action is elaborated. These are authorized by the legislature and implemented by the organizational set-up authorized in its turn by the planning executive . . . In these ideal processes a planning agency is charged with the overall guidance. The nature of guidance varies depending on the responsibility given to the agency in each particular case.

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The need was felt to further qualify 'language planning' by adding 'on the national level' as a feature of its definition.

This definition is specified in terms of decision-making theory, and provides a model for discussing the many ways (at greater or lesser distance from the model) in which language problems are actually treated in any national political community. Any speech community treats its language system (set of speech varieties) in ways which can be described in terms of decision-making models, yet only some may approximate, or require, planning of (one or some of) its language(s). It should be emphasized that the term 'planning' as used here must not be misunderstood as normative for, or imposable on, a speech community; we use an action-oriented (i. e. decision-making) model in order to provide an evaluation-metric, thus implying that explanatory relationships should be sought. We ask the reader to recognize the possibility of evaluation within the political-social milieu of any speech community.

Any scholar who commits himself to the study of a foreign community may, involuntarily or not, find himself an agent in political causes. Yet, evaluation is made possible by good theory, and the validity of evaluation is controlled by depth and sincerity of study. The use or acceptance of evaluation, however, is subject to political preferences of any group of people who opt to voice an opinion--be it the studied community, or the international scholarly community. Good planning theory, therefore, explicitly recognizes the supremacy of the expressed preference of a defined political community (which we will assume to coincide with a speech community in what follows and which according to our definition of planning is a nation).

It would be possible to select another approach to situations of language treatment, namely to study the use of the term 'planning' (and equivalent terms in other languages) and explore the content of such activities as the term happens to refer to, in each recorded situation. Such a work-procedure seems rather uneconomical, however, given, firstly, a general planning model from which the present nominal definition has been derived, and secondly, the at least equal opportunity to capture uses of the term 'planning' proceeding from this latter nominal model. Naturally, the latter is subject to revision and specification as knowledge accumulates, which removes any doubts as to its validity.

This paper will place language planning in the wider context of a speech community's 'treatment' (Neustupný 1970) of any language issue. But first it will provide some background to present-day study of language planning, particularly the Language Planning Processes Project.

A new topic of study. The planning of language is a new topic in the literature of social planning. Individual linguists may have paid attention to language planning as a discipline worthy of pursuit many years ago; but it would nevertheless be correct to say that today language planning is being systematically introduced into linguistics. There is growing literature on the planning of language; conferences include language planning as a legitimate subsection of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics; and students can take courses on this topic at some universities.

Today's language planning was born within the sociolinguistics of the sixties in reply to mounting evidence of the need for immediate, practical solutions to the language problems of developing countries. Its direction was also influenced by linguists' and social scientists' experience of and familiarity with immigrant and refugee problems, rather than by initial academic interest in the treatment, cultivation, or planning of languages. Yet, there are national traditions of language cultivation in Europe and also elsewhere (for instance, cf. Neustupný 1970 on Japan and Czechoslovakia). Research should not be conducted only in developing nations, nor only in nations where a language choice has recently been made or where language is a burning political issue. Many questions of language planning--indeed, the hypothetical consequences of choice of language in a developing country, i. e. the future content of language development there--could as well concern the developed nations.

If we attempt to develop a 'theory' for this new topic, then it should be formulated to fit both language cultivation of the old world, i. e. traditions of language cultivation in Europe and processes establishing some amount of language conformity in the Anglo-Saxon countries, and developmental work with language in the new nations and recently modernizing nations. Such a theory of 'language treatment' (of which I consider 'language planning' to be a part) should aim at an explanation of the many different ways in which societies treat their languages.

Because of the many interests that converge on the study of language planning, and because there is no unified international/academic tradition, opinion may be divided as to the meaning of, or constraints to be imposed on, the term 'language planning'. I would therefore like to survey the assumptions of the Language Planning Processes Project, and relate some of my post-fieldwork but pre-analysis thoughts to these assumptions. The Language Planning Processes Project is sponsored by the Ford Foundation. It is based at Stanford University. The Project has studied aspects of language planning in India, Indonesia, Israel, Sweden, and the Nation of Bengal.

A terminological problem. Before going on, let me clear up a terminological point. The term 'language planning' as used by the Project conflicts with the definition that Valter Tauli (1968) gives the term. Tauli wants to formulate principles for language change which give to language a balance of beauty, clarity, elasticity, and economy. Even if we assume that there are better and worse languages, and that linguists should seek a more efficient state of language--do we know enough to develop criteria that can separate what is good from what is bad in language and that can tell us what efficient language is? We know very little about the structure and use of language; and we know very little about people's thoughts, likes or dislikes, about language. The conflict between a linguistically based 'ideal' language planning and an empirically based problems-of-speech-communities language planning demonstrates that a linguist's view of language and his vision of the beauty of language constitute but one aspect of social and linguistic reality: people do indeed have different opinions about their own or others' languages. The linguist is, of course, entitled to his point of view. But there is little need to argue these different meanings of the term language planning. And if a community lacks a common language it matters less if the first effort in bridging that gap is linguistically beautiful (in any absolute sense of that desire) or not (cf. Haugen's 1969 review of Tauli in Language).

Background to the Language Planning Processes Project. Language planning had already been very much in the center of discussion in the autumn of 1966 at the Conference on Language Problems of Developing Nations. The Conference materials as published in the book Language Problems of Developing Nations (Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta) show that the papers--sociolinguistically descriptive or practically diagnostic--are dominated by the often politically sensitive and complex questions of language choice in many developing nations and in Europe. Examples were drawn from parts of Africa, from India, Israel, Peru, Papua, Paraguay. Practical questions concerned future official language, language of education, the role of the former colonial language, etc. In this context, linguistic interest was focused on consequences of language choice, particularly when a formerly local language in a technologically innocent country or a language long used for cultural intercourse but without previous use in technical and/or modern-administrative spheres was to be developed into an official or educational language. Vocabulary attracted the main interest: how it could be enlarged and standardized; and how could so-called foreign words be taken care of. To a lesser extent there were remarks on the need for normative grammars and procedures for obtaining them and for fostering style registers. There were also some comments on choice and change of spelling or writing systems. Some examples of evaluation of competing pronunciations

(from Haiti and the Philippines) were given. But in general more data were given on language choice and vocabulary than on other problems. Consequences of language choice and the dependency of language choice on the relative degree of development of available languages or treatment routines for language still remained open to exploratory discussion.

At the East-West Center, a meeting in the spring of 1969 emphasized these questions about consequences of language choice. The working papers are now available in the book Can Language Be Planned? (Rubin and Jernudd). This book has four sections:

    (1) the motivation and rationalization for language policy,
    (2) case studies of language planning,
    (3) a general approach to language planning, and
    (4) research strategies and a view towards the future.

Although papers in the first section of the book deal primarily with language policy (sentiment and expediency with regard to choice between languages), the other sections give considerable (but not exclusive) attention to language development. The case studies, for instance, include discussions of orthography and spelling reform in Israel, lexicon in Turkey, the development of Indonesian and Bengali, and language choice and language politics in Ireland, East Africa, and the Philippines.

Kinds of language decisions and their implementation. The expectations of the Project with regard to its study of language planning are described in the collection of research proposals entitled Research Outline for Comparative Studies of Language Planning (in Rubin and Jernudd). The proposals are gathered into three groups:

    (1) policy formulation (which should perhaps be renamed language 'determination'),
    (2) codification and elaboration (for which terms I would now prefer a single one, language 'development', at least for the convenience of not always having to make a choice), and
    (3) implementation.

This tripartite division borrowed Haugen's terms (cf. Haugen 1966) but Haugen's initial formulations may have been allowed to undergo changes of content. (We have attempted to discuss Haugen's scheme in Jernudd and Das Gaupta. Briefly, the paper concludes that Haugen's entire scheme necessarily applies to every language decision.)

I do not intend to repeat again the ensemble of research questions as formulated by the Project paper, but it may be useful to give a couple of examples, and to offer some remarks on the meaning of the tri-partite division.

(1) Language determination refers to decisions concerning the functional distribution of language varieties in a community. Language determination also refers to decisions concerning which variety shall be developed for specific functions. Concretely this refers e.g. to government policy in today's Papua, New Guinea concerning the distribution of English, New Guinea Pidgin, Policy Motu, and tribal languages in e.g. schools, mass media, and administration. Also, this refers e.g. to which of several available spoken New Guinea Pidgin dialects shall be regarded as the referent for further development of written New Guinea Pidgin--there is the dialect of Madang (a publication center) now regarded as the most 'pure' or 'beautiful' Pidgin, and there is the dialect of the central administrative town Port Moresby. (There can be policies of determination, development, and implementation alike. However, 'language policy' at present normally means issues of language determination.)

(2) Language development refers to decisions concerning the standardization and unification of language use, by means of grammars, spelling manuals, word lists, etc. (cf. Ferguson 1968).

(3) Implementation refers to (decisions concerning) the (more or less systematic) attempts to influence language use by propagating the results of decisions on language determination and development. Examples are bills of government regulating language use in specified social situations (education, for instance) or, simply, the sale of grammars and dictionaries. Successful implementation implies an understanding of people's attitudes to language, beliefs about language, and language proficiency--briefly, the context of propagation of 'products' of language planning.

The importance of context of implementation is illustrated by the following Swedish example. If a Swedish speaker knows neither Latin, Greek, nor English and says baby [bebi, beibi, bäbi] but [bebisar] (i.e. mixing Swedish and English pronunciation and morphology), or, centrat (in the singular determinate), it would probably be quite difficult to make him say anything else, should this be regarded as desirable. The examples are uninteresting unless in fact people do want to influence change, and they do: cf. Svenska Akademiens Ordlista över Svenska Språket, the articles baby and centrisk; Om teknikens språk 1970:66 on centrum; Ord och Uttryck 1963, section 3:38; and Dunås 1970:102-03 on centrum and pages 25-26 on baby.

The division of language decisions into those constituting determination of language, and those constituting development of language, forms the backbone of a set of empirical hypotheses which imply that decision-making behavior in some ways differs in the two categories. There are interdependencies between issues of determination and development of language: any language development

(clearly and perhaps trivially) implies choice of code. For instance, both categories are constrained by possibilities of effecting desired (criterial) impact on language use with available means. Planning necessarily implies implementation: solutions to language problems take into account (im)possibilities of bringing about language change among a group of speakers. If procedures for implementation are not formulated, decisions on issues of determination and development become meaningless. (We argued above that Tauli's efforts are in vain, and partly because of lacking social and political realism.)

A simple graphic representation of the relationships between our three categories is:

determination ⟷ development
⟷ ⟷
implementation
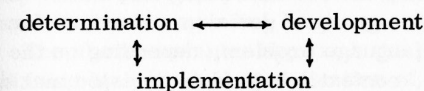
An immediate empirical problem of language planning would be to find out under what conditions and to what extent decisions regarding determination of language are constrained or alleviated by the varying developmental conditions (stages) of available language varieties and how the context of implementation constrains any language decision.

Planning as one kind of decision making. The Project emphasized one kind of organization of language planning by selecting to study and therefore assuming the importance of agencies that have been established to manage and prepare language development, namely 'language planning agencies' sponsored by government authority. But societies can solve language problems in different ways, with or without planning.

Although developing countries may present language problems of such a magnitude that a centrally guided and meticulously planned effort may be inviting, there is no a priori defense for building a model of conscious language change on such a system of decision making only. (See Das Gupta 1970 for this broader base in model-building.) Also, planning can be defined independently of kind of language problem. Planning is a model against which actually occurring decision-making behavior can be measured. So, neither planning nor any other procedure for solving language problems can be taken for granted--each has to be shown to be present, justifiable, or advantageous.

Briefly, planning means explicit choice between alternative futures. Often this choice is made by an organization that is particularly established for this purpose. In the best of cases this

organization also attempts to register the success of predicted re-
sults. In this sense, language planning appears to lack its full
equivalent in any society. On the other hand many countries recog-
nize conscious language change as a kind of treatment of language.
Thus, in Sweden sprakvard is a well-established practical and aca-
demic discipline of Scandinavian philology.

A legitimate research aim is therefore to understand when a
society could advantageously plan language change or to understand
why societies in fact differ in their patterns of language treatment
(including the use or not of planning).

Limits of language planning. At any given time, different kinds
of language treatment may coexist, the one kind being more ad-
vantageous than the other for some group of decision makers or for
solving some particular kind of language problem, depending on the
social, political, linguistic, etc. context. Individual decision making
can very well dominate some set of language problems, without
societal (collective) disadvantage, whereas governmental authori-
zation and federal financing may be necessary for other language
problems. (It is tempting to suggest that determination problems
require 'higher-order' administrative and political guidance, and
authorization.) A theory of language treatment must attempt to ex-
plain the existence, co-occurrence, and potentialities of different
systems of decision making.

Agencies other than governmental or national can obviously con-
cern themselves with language in an orderly fashion, or be described
to do so. Examples are:

(1) National but nongovernmental agencies: associations of
engineers or other professionals who coin or spread terminology;
the Singapore Chamber of Commerce that constructed and issued
language examinations and a style manual for business correspond-
ence in the Malay language.

(2) Non-national and nongovernmental agencies: the Shell Com-
pany in Malaysia that provides its own oil terminology when needed,
although often in association with the official language planning
agency (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) or other oil companies. By its
personnel policy and internal language teaching program, Shell pro-
motes Malay: Shell produces its own language materials teaching a
specified kind of Malay. Or by its language officer who advises on
business correspondence in Malay. In all these activities, Shell
contributes towards the national growth of Malay, but is not pri-
marily concerned with decisions for national spread.

(3) A newspaper's proof-reading function, including the issuing
of detailed instructions about hyphenation, spelling, etc.

(4) The individual author, letter-writer, or even after-dinner
speaker--are they not 'rigorous' enough oftentimes in reaching their
decisions on language use? One may quote the very sincere dis-
cussions in letters to columnists asking how to make a speech, how
to address such-and-such a person, when to use certain expressions,
how to abbreviate, etc.

In the last couple of examples the rigour or explicitness of the
decision making may be weak, but the individual intent and wish to
find out is clearly very often strong and the discussion sometimes
intricate. Another example on the individual level is perhaps better:
the decision to learn or not to learn a new language because a future
job may demand it. The weighing of factors entering into the choice
may not be put on paper, but it can be an example of argued and
explicit choice regarding language.

The above examples approach the problem of definition of language
planning by a gradual specification of the requirement of width of im-
pact of a language decision and of observable administrative routines
surrounding the decision maker. Shall we apply the term language
planning when an office manager or manager of a secretarial pool
issues a note specifying which words can be used and which not in
writing certain kinds of letters? Or when a scientific team jokingly
names a new perhaps revolutionary discovery, breaking phonological
rules or not? Or take the word ombudsman in Australian English.
Is it a problem of language planning to account for how the Australian
Broadcasting Commission (ABC) most probably issued an order
through its language specialist that the word shall be pronounced
['ɔmbɐdzmæn] whereas many others decided to say [ɔm'bɐdzmæn].
Does it become an act of language planning when the ABC discusses
the word, but not when perhaps some students at the university argue
about the pronunciation? We have chosen to exclude these acts from
the realm of planning, inviting instead study of these kinds of language
decision making as instances of language treatment.

Study of terminology exemplifies different treatment patterns. At
present a particularly gratifying question would be to explain or
initially to discover differences in selection of language problems
and decision-making behavior between (some) developing countries
and (some) developed countries. The Project selected to compara-
tively study terminological development because of its prominence
in the treatment patterns of many countries. Project questionnaires
and other aspects of its research design emphasized the study of
language determination issues on a national level, and the immediate
consequences thereof as reflected in the development of terminology.

Development of terminology is common to a great many different
language planning agencies and countries. The Central Board for

Development of Bengali in former East Bengal produced about ten word-lists in various subjects. The Swedish Centre of Technical Terminology produces word lists, as do the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Malaysia, the Hebrew Academy in Israel, agencies in India, Tanzania, the Soviet Union, Austria, Finland, etc., etc. In many countries word-lists provide systematized terminologies for the first time in the national language. Without them it may be difficult to agree on textbook standards so that the national language could be used on a broad basis in schools.

The above-mentioned urgency in preparing terminologies is brought out very clearly in the aims of the Malaysian Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, and of the Central Board for Development of Bengali. The fourth aim of the Malaysian agency says: 'to standardize the spelling and pronunciation and to coin appropriate terminologies in the national language'. Note the word coin. Section (b) of the aims of the Bengali Board reads: 'to remove the existing deficiencies in Bengali, particularly in the field of Natural and Social Sciences as well as in technologies, in order that it becomes the medium of instruction at the higher level'. Note the emphasis on education.

Word-lists of developing countries usually enumerate a series of terms without definitions. Meanings are given by a parallel list of English corresponding terms. (See Istilah 1968.) Word-lists from technologically advanced countries, on the other hand, may provide very detailed definitions and foreign language equivalents, and emphasize systematicity of terminology (by diagramming or subclassification). (See Produktionsteknisk ordlista 1971.)

The managing director of the Swedish Centre of Technical Terminology, Einar Selander, has summarized the main aims of Swedish terminological work in the following words (my translation):

. . . the main aims of systematic terminological work will be to create and maintain semantic order in already available terminology and to implement or suggest new terms in relationship thereto. The first task implies above all the systematization of and establishing of relationships between concepts, and the formulation of content of concepts and definitions, so that terms obtain a precise and unified meaning in different spheres of activity. The second task, to suggest new terms, is often perceived as urgent and is in any case the most extrovert one (Selander 1971).

The differing developmental stages of the Malaysian and Bengali languages, on the one hand, and Swedish, on the other hand, create different lexical results and different emphases in aims. Internal

functioning and self-perception of the agencies in the three cases will probably be very similar, yet contexts and outputs differ.

A unifying model of language treatment. Neustupný (1970) offers a crude but overarching model of language treatment that both comprises language determination, development, and implementation and allows statements on differential decision-making patterns. He distinguishes between a 'cultivation approach' and a 'policy approach' to language treatment (cf. my attempt to relate some of Neustupný's terms to Haugen's description of the Norwegian case in my 1971 review of Haugen). According to Neustupný, societies can be characterized as employing the one approach or the other. (It should be noted, however, that features characterizing the approaches are not exclusive, so a policy-cultivation scale may therefore be more appropriate. Empirical research could attempt to define a matrix which can be used to determine a society's place on this scale of treatment by the configuration of values assigned to the features defining the matrix.) Developed countries are found to belong to the cultivation type of treatment pattern, developing nations to the policy type. The former type is characterized by such language problems as 'correctness, efficiency, linguistic levels fulfilling specialized functions, problems of style, constraints on communicative capacity, etc.' (Neustupný 1970:4). These language problems fit our development category above. The latter type is characterized by problems of 'selection of the national language, standardization, literacy, orthographies, problems of stratification of language (repertoire of code varieties) etc.' (Neustupný 1970:4). These language problems largely fit our determination category above. Obviously, a major task of research at the present time is to enlarge our understanding of what actually goes on in any one of those countries where people are seen to pay attention to language.

Neustupný (1970:10) says that a developing country displays 'a high degree of arbitrary social and linguistic heterogeneity' and that 'the diversity within the repertoire of varieties is easily recognizable and leads to a clear policy approach . . . ' It would seem to follow that such a country could profitably use the kind of decision making which we call planning. In 'more developed communities . . . inter-variety relationships become less conspicuous, variation is fine . . . and it is now issues like stability and functional differentiation that matter' (Neustupný 1970:11). Cultivation countries, then, would have a great deal of differentiated ('diffracted') decision making. Neustupný (1970:12) suggests that there are advantages to be derived from applying 'the policy approach in communities characterized by a high degree of social development' and the cultivation approach to less developed societies. It will be necessary to connect types of

language problems to ways of decision making in order to make these suggestions meaningful, and the primary division into two approaches subject to testing. Then we may be able to account for e.g. Das Gupta's description of the pluralistic, democratic way in which India gradually solves its language determination issues. Also, the Swedish linguist Teleman (1971) describes Sweden in terms of 'cultivation' features: the source of initiative for language treatment is decentralized. Advice on language use rather than ruling dominates language discussion by agencies. Yet, he advocates more central coordination!

It seems to me that one could propose another base for characterization of the language treatment capacities of developing and developed societies. Developing societies have not yet established automatic links between language use and the expressive needs of modern technology, modern politics, etc. Many language problems, therefore, may necessitate wider discussion and raise more related linguistic or social issues than would be the case in a developed society. In the latter, a net of institutions have accumulated experience in treating recurring language problems--routinized treatment. The problems are absorbed more easily. They become problems of each particular sector of language use (such as education, technology, newspaper production, etc.). In both kinds of societies there would seem to be ample opportunity for language planning.

We must, however, disconnect stage of technological development from pattern of treatment and kind of language system. It has not been disproven that a speech community which is not 'modern' (i.e. not industrialized, not technologically advanced, not administratively refined, etc.) cannot be linguistically mature (Jernudd forthcoming), display rich (inter- and intra-variety) language differentiation and accompanying ways of treating language.

NOTE

[1]Dr. Joan Rubin and Dr. Mary Slaughter gave me very helpful comments and editorial suggestions.

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