Language Planning:
Current Issues and Research

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LANGUAGE PLANNING: DISCUSSION OF SOME CURRENT ISSUES[1]

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1. What are language problems? Many writers would agree that language planning has as its central focus the identification of language problems. Although there are several examples in the literature of short lists of language problems, most focus on the language code--its choice and standardization. There are, however, beginning to be some suggestions that this focus is not broad enough to cover the important range of problems which are somehow related both linguistically and socio-politically. These suggestions seem to indicate that we will understand both the processes of change and the rationales behind the changes better if we broaden our definitions of what constitute language problems.

One suggestion is that made by Neustupný (1968:287) who feels that: "There is a necessity to think of 'language' problems in the broad context of communication problems, and to include in 'language' problems besides language code problems also the problems of speech." Neustupný reminds us that in considering language problems we should not forget a number of important aspects of the problem: (1) the interrelationship between language code and speech, (2) the relation between language code and other social patterns, and (3) the relation between verbal and nonverbal communication. Indeed, he feels that preoccupation with language code problems (problems of orthography, of choice of variants within the same code, of vocabulary) is essentially dangerous. Such preoccupation can lead to the failure of a reform 'because they did not comply with the problems of

other communication patterns and were not accompanied by corres-
ponding policies' (Neustupný 1968:287).

A further suggestion toward the identification and understanding
of language problems is that made by Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971).
They suggest that instead of focusing only on the linguistic phenome-
non that the socio-political motivation/rationale behind language
problems also be part of the classification and understanding of what
the problems are. They offer the following example of the inter-
relationship between language problems and socio-political moti-
vation. 'Modernization may create demands for language change and
demands for standardization, which may also be directed toward lan-
guage' (Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971:205-06). What is implied here
is that perhaps in many cases the more general phenomenon of
modernization creates demands which are also made on language.
Thus language problems can only be understood when they are re-
lated to the more general processes occurring within a society.
Jernudd (1971), places considerable importance on seeing the links
between the kinds of language problems and the kinds of decision
making.

Three proposals for typologies of language problems have thus far
been suggested. Each of them attempts to classify different kinds of
behavior toward language problems and will no doubt serve as an
initial point in talking about language problems; still we can expect
more comprehensive sorts of typologies when we include the com-
plexities mentioned: language code/speech, verbal/nonverbal com-
munication, language as part of the social processes of change, etc.

An early typology suggested by Haugen (1966)[2] is displayed in
Figure 1. The definition of linguistic form given by Haugen is 'the

FIGURE 1. Language typology (Haugen 1966).

	Initiation	Implementation
Linguistic form	1. Selection of norm	2. Codification of norm
Linguistic function	3. Elaboration of function	4. Acceptance by intended population

linguistic structure in all its ramifications'. The examples of selec-
tion of norm (select or modify old norm or create new standard) and
of codification (choice of script, orthography, pronunciation, gram-
matical forms, lexical items) all seem to refer to the language code.

The definition of linguistic function given by Haugen is 'the variety of
uses to which that structure is put'. Under elaboration of function,
Haugen still seems to be referring to the language code; examples of
elaboration refer to the innovation or adaptation of vocabulary into
the realms of scientific, imaginative, and emotive experience. If
we assume that this typology is meant to imply some sort of evolu-
tionary sequence, then we may note that each of the first three steps--
which seem to address themselves to the language code--involves the
fourth which appears to relate largely to the social side of the prob-
lem.[3] We should also note that this typology does not explicate all
of the kinds of language problems which others would like to see in-
cluded in language planning.

A second typology is given by Rabin (1971) who divides language
planning aims (? problems) into three kinds based on what sort of
disciplinary expert should deal with the problem. While I think we
might disagree with the actual items which go into any one sub-
division, it does seem of use to see some problems as requiring
more information/motivation from the socio-political or the lin-
guistic side. These subdivisions might also relate to the different
types of treatment (see section 4 for a discussion of this term)
which we might expect language problems to receive (see section 6).
The three divisions which Rabin offers are the following:

(1) Extra-linguistic aims: concerning the use of a given lan-
guage block or the relative extent of usage of competing language
blocks. For example, change in the area of use (either geographi-
cal or communal). These aims seem to concern primarily sociolo-
gists and political scientists and educational planners.

(2) Semi-linguistic aims: changes in the writing, spelling, or
pronunciation. Rabin feels that although strong sociological and
psychological factors seem to be involved, mostly linguists do the
research. There are lots of examples in the literature of the diffi-
culties that such an assignment causes. (Cf. too Neustupný's warn-
ing when the other patterns of communication are not considered--
mentioned here earlier.)

(3) Linguistic aims: vocabulary enlargement, vocabulary stand-
ardization, style. Rabin notes that this is the province of the norma-
tive linguist and the literary practitioner. While involving social
variables, these problems are more largely linguistic, he feels.

A third typology of language problems is that offered by Neustupný
(1970) who suggests that there are two basically different approaches
to language problems. The one he calls the policy approach; the
other the cultivation approach. The distinction seems largely to be
based on whether the focus of attention is the language code (policy)
or whether the focus of attention is that greater attention is given to
speaking (cultivation). The problems included in the policy approach

are: the selection of the national language, standardization, literacy, orthographies, problems of stratification of language (repertoire of code varieties), etc. Problems included in the cultivation approach are: questions of correctness, efficiency, linguistic levels fulfilling specialized functions, problems of style, constraints on communicative competence, etc. While this approach is appealing because it does separate or at least attempts to separate problems which focus on code or speech, it is also incomplete because Neustupný does not follow his own broader outline which includes nonverbal communication problems nor does it seem helpful for a typology which links the socio-cultural rationale and decision-making process with types of language problems.

Neustupný suggests that there may be an evolutionary sequence to the two kinds of approaches: the policy approach is connected with the study of less developed speech communities while the cultivation approach is found in modern industrialized societies. It remains to be seen when more data on language planning are available.[4] Neustupný examined Japanese language treatment and found such a sequence seems appropriate.

2. Why plan language? There seems to be a great deal of scepticism both among lay persons and linguists about the 'planning' of language. If, for instance as Tauli (1968) suggests, the focus of language planning should be the improvement of language as an instrument of communication by making it more economical and regular, it seems that objections to language planning may have some validity. Linguists have pointed out how difficult it is to assess economy of language. Others have pointed out that the definition of economy can never be entirely linguistic--even if it could be measured. Still others might question the contribution toward national development and/or modernization which regularity might make. This question must be considered in the social framework and not in the abstract as normativists such as Tauli seem to prefer. Finally, some persons more humanistically inclined fear that such regulations might lead to the destruction of normal thought processes--a strong fear but one difficult to establish in fact.

If on the other hand, one takes the tack suggested by Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971) that language is to be considered as a resource, then we can proceed to consider when and where it might be useful, necessary, or important to consider language problems. Language development can be understood within the context of societal development, needs, and values and may thus lead to more appropriate policy decisions. Not all language problems would need to receive public attention. It would appear that they might be expected to receive public attention if and when they are seen to relate to the

collective goals of a particular society. It is of course of great interest to study when language problems are seen to relate to social problems and then what sorts of decisions re language are made.

3. What does language planning consist of? Most writers would agree that it begins with the identification of a problem; but what the nature of that problem is, is open to discussion. One approach common to linguists has been to focus on the language code--its choice and standardization. Thus, Tauli (1968:27) defines language planning as 'the methodical activity of regulating and improving existing languages or creating new common regional, national or international languages'. As Haugen (1971) notes, both Tauli and Ray are in agreement that the heart of any program is the linguistic evaluation of competing language forms. Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971:197) have challenged this overly normative and narrowly linguistic approach to language planning because they feel that it falls short of describing the more general phenomenon: 'Contemporary treatment of language planning does not seem to be sufficiently sensitized to the complexity of the social rationale of language planning in practice'. Das Gupta (1970:224-25) notes that although even those charged with the task of language development may fall into the false assumption that official language planning is essentially a technical assignment and thus, may assume that language politics are to be viewed as a menace to be eradicated, that in fact language politics should be seen as a political issue which demands a political solution. Jernudd (1971) feels that the complex social rationale of language planning must be understood as a basis for any language planning theory. Thus, Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971:197) emphasize the need for a broader identification of problems and see that a major task of language planning is to 'identify the concrete areas of society that demand planned action regarding language resources'. The critical points here are that language problems are to be seen within the social and political framework and that language can be seen as one more resource which an administration may manipulate for its own goals. Of importance too is the focus given by Rubin and Jernudd (1971) who emphasize the fact that 'change' of language use and language rules are the objects of language planning. They note that such change does not take place in vacuo and therefore language planning must consider the facts of language within the fuller social context.

Once one sees that language planning is part of the political and administrative process, it can also be recognized that such decision making may meet to a lesser or greater degree certain formal requirements of good planning. (Rubin 1971 discusses these requirements as they relate to language planning.) In broad terms, most would agree that the planning process requires that in finding solutions

to language problems alternate goals, means/strategies, and outcomes must be considered. Planning is always future-oriented and in the consideration of several alternatives, a forecast of future consequences is made to the best knowledge of the planners (Thorburn 1971:254).

In the process of deciding upon a solution to a problem the several vested interests may come to focus upon language as a means to achieve their political/social/economic goals. Because language may serve so many goals, it is impossible to predict and classify the implications of policy decisions unless we understand the social rationale and conflicts underlying such decisions. A typology of language policy decisions will not allow for predictable results unless accompanied by a close haul analysis of the socio-political background behind these decisions. It might, however, be possible to consider several typologies of decisions based on:

(1) The relationship between popular attitudes and actions toward the language problem and the descriptions/knowledge/attention of a set of experts (who are more likely to go to the heart of the matter). This is the sort of thing Neustupný talks of in his 'depth' parameter (see section 6 post). It is a matter for investigation to examine whether a language problem tends to be more popularly attended to or more rigorously attended to and how the two groups interact in a particular society.

(2) The relationship between political goals and the language problem. Is the language problem a real one or is language just being used as a shield for other political goals? One might inquire whether certain issues (for example, code issues of wide generality) might not more frequently lend themselves to politicization. Alternatively, one might ask whether within a particular nation certain language problems are politicized as a matter of tradition.

(3) Does the degree of politicization relate to the saliency of popular attitudes and actions toward particular language problems?

4. Is language planning restricted to government bodies? Jernudd (1971) points out that language problems are found on all levels of decision making: individual, group, or national. Further, Das Gupta (1971) points out that both private and semi-governmental bodies may be concerned in the working out of solutions to language problems of national relevance. We might therefore expect that some sort of 'treatment' of language may occur at all levels of socio-cultural integration for the several levels of socio-cultural integration. Of interest is the relation between the type of treatment (cf. section 6) and the type of group for whom it is felt to be a problem. According to Neustupný (1970) at least some language problems receive attention in any community by nonlinguists as well as by linguists. He

feels that patterns of thinking and talking about language problems are easily (possibly regularly) established and frequently strict constraints are imposed in this manner on the identification and understanding of relevant issues.

Neustupný's view of language treatment serves to widen the scope of language planning or at least puts language planning in a larger and perhaps more interesting framework. Language planning is seen as one kind of language treatment. It remains an empirical question as to what extent different levels of society at different moments in their development choose to treat language problems in the more conscious, systematic, future-oriented fashion which the label planning would seem to imply. By restricting the definition of language planning to that kind of treatment which is governmental and close to the planning ideal, we can then fruitfully explore differences in types of treatment--in what ways and why some type of societies/types of problems may closely approximate the planning ideal.

5. Is language planning restricted to developing nations? It would appear that this is not the case, but rather that different kinds of problems or different kinds of treatment might be expected to arise depending on the type of development. Suggestions have already been made that there may be differences between the kinds of problems nations may concern themselves with at different stages in their development. Looking at the evidence from Japan, Neustupný (1971) notes that two distinct approaches (language policy and language cultivation) have been taken. In the period since the Meiji Restoration, language policy was given a great deal of attention; whereas, since World War II more attention has been given to the cultivation approach. Neustupný hypothesizes that the policy approach is connected with the study of less developed speech communities (the less developed seems to refer to socioeconomic factors) while the cultivation approach is found in modern industrial societies. He suggests that there is a relationship between the economic level and the social and linguistic levels. 'It is the less developed modern (or modernizing) societies in which the policy approach prevails. These societies are characterized by a high degree of arbitrary . . . social and linguistic heterogeneity' (Neustupný 1971:10).

A related question has been: what are the differences between language planning in Europe and in developing nations. Fishman (1971) notes that although there is language planning in both Europe and South and Southeast Asia, the differences between them may be explained by the different kinds of nationalism which have developed in the two areas. Thus, Fishman (1971:14) notes the lesser stress on ethnic authenticity in South and Southeast Asian nationalism is reflected in the correspondingly greater roles of both indigenous and

imported languages of wider communication (rather than of vernaculars alone) as languages of central government and higher education. Fishman sees the emphasis on English and French and on Hindi, Urdu, Malay, Indonesian, and Filipino as definite signs of the continued supraethnic stress of South and Southeast Asian language planning. However, he predicts a return in South and Southeast Asia to supraethnic authenticity goals.

6. Is there some productive way in which to compare types of treatment of language problems? While this particular question seems central to language planning, it has not yet really been very much discussed. An initial approach has been made by Neustupný (1970) who suggests that there are at least four ways in which the treatment patterns differ:

(1) Systematicity: this refers to the extent to which problems are treated as an ordered system of items (rather than in some ad hoc way).

(2) Theoretical elaborateness: some treatments are more meaningfully based on sociological or linguistic models while others do not seem so based.

(3) Depth: this parameter seems to relate to getting at the true nature of the problem rather than remaining biased by popular prejudices and/or established ways of dealing with a problem. His example comes from the Japanese: a surface treatment of problems would see all language problems in Japan as that of script reform whereas a deeper treatment would recognize problems ranging from stylistic and lexical to phonological elements.

(4) Rationality: this parameter combines a number of features which might better be separated eventually. Within it are included: affective neutrality (opposed to: affectiveness), specificity of goals and solutions (opposed to: diffuse), universalism (opposed to: particularism), emphasis on effectiveness (opposed to: emphasis on quality), long-term goals (opposed to: short-term goals).

As a beginning approximation to the combining of linguistic and socio-political treatments of language problems, these parameters seem very suggestive. One might question, however, how interesting the second parameter--theoretical elaborateness--really is. Perhaps it might be more productive to consider the extent to which people pay attention to and/or try to use such models. The third parameter (depth) seems to combine a number of comparisons: those, namely, of a factual consideration of the actual problem with (1) popular attitudes toward the problem, (2) popular verbalizations of the problem, and (3) popular and/or political uses of the problem. These may need to be sorted out into different types of depth with different kinds of

results. The fourth parameter (rationality) is, as indicated, a combination of too many variables.

It would also be extremely helpful if these parameters, when clarified further, could be measured against actual and optimal policy for different levels of society. Questions which might be asked are: What degrees of systematicity have actual policies had? Which groups in society prefer to use which degrees of systematicity? (Cf. Rubin 1971 who indicates that within good planning at any one point in time, it might not be advantageous to be systematic or rational.) What degrees of theoretical elaborateness have been employed? Or, to what extent have people referred to theoretical models in their language treatment patterns? What degree of theoretical elaborateness is optimal for which language problems and social goals? One could question to what extent one could rationalize long-term goals since planners seem to feel that long-term goals lead to many unpredictable variables. These and other questions could be used to evaluate the parameters suggested by Neustupný. Other typologies of language treatment will doubtless appear as we look at the language planning and treatment data.

The questions isolated in this paper illustrate, we feel, the changing and developing focus of language planning. The problem does not seem to be just one of terminological differences but rather suggests there are differences in theoretical frameworks. More recent authors are focusing on the identification of types of processes, types of values, types of communities, types of language problems, types of treatment and the establishment of the relationship between these. Much more empirical data will be required to establish the proper framework for this complex set of variables.

NOTES

[1]My thanks to Björn Jernudd for his comments on this paper.
[2]Some variants of this fourfold typology appear in Haugen 1966a and 1969.
[3]Haugen 1966a assigns 'selection' and 'acceptance' to 'society' and 'codification' and 'elaboration' to 'language'. Whether these four processes are largely language or societal problems would, in fact, appear to be an empirical matter depending on the particular speech community and on how language problems are handled.
[4]Jernudd (1972) suggests that the connection between a technologically modern society and a linguistically mature one may not be an automatic relationship and should be kept distinct in order to examine just what the relationship might be.

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