A language management approach to language problems: Integrating macro and micro dimensions

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BOOK REVIEW

A language management approach to language problems: Integrating macro and micro dimensions, (Studies in World Language Problems), edited by Goro Christoph Kimura and Lisa Fairbrother. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2020. Pp. XII+273. ISBN: 978-9-02720-547-6(HB); ISBN: 978-9-02726-126-7(e-Book).

Goro Christoph Kimura and Lisa Fairbrother combine theoretical overviews with recent empirical studies in this edited volume to explore the conceptualization of the micro and macro as a continuum in managing language problems. The book opens with a chapter on the introduction of language management theory (LMT) and then presents in turn the theoretical perspectives of the management of language problems (Part I) and recent empirical studies with three different themes: the management of contact situations in the East Asia research (Part II), the issue of standard varieties in the Central European research (Part III) and the reflexive role of the researcher (Part IV). The volume concludes with an epilogue (Chapter 13) to assess its achievements and limitations by taking a reflexive stance. The 13 chapters in this volume are organized into the introduction (Chapter 1), the four parts (Chapter 2 to 12) and the conclusion (Chapter 13). The writing is clear and accessible throughout.

For those who consider the concept of 'language management' somewhat unfamiliar or a bit too complex, Chapter 5 to 7(Part II) of this volume may help to change their mind. The very three chapters, clearly written and engaging, are strongly recommended as the first encounter of this volume, making one well-prepared for the abstract idea of LMT as well as its application in macro and micro dimensions. Specifically, the three chapters present recent empirical studies in such an exceptionally reader-friendly way that even those without basic knowledge of language management would be able to digest them. The three chapters are dedicated to illustrating how problems in individual interactions in the Japanese workplace (Chapter 5) and the academic context (Chapter 6), as well as how the intersection of management processes in individual interactions (Chapter 7) can be contextualized in the context of broader macro-level issues and policies.

Notwithstanding, the structure of this volume is well laid out and it is worth noting that the editors tactically list the chapters in order to gradually engage the readers from LMT itself (Part I) to its applications (Part II& III) to researchers' reflexivity (IV) towards it. Additionally, if we scrutinize the content in each chapter of these parts, the strengths of East Asia and Central European research are impartially recognized with almost the same number of chapters dedicated to them. Considering the two places are clearly established hubs for the analysis of language problems and situations, it is strategically reasonable to attach equal significance to them.

Chapter 1, as an introduction to this volume, offers an exposition of the editors' overall conception of 'macro and micro as a continuum' for language management. It begins with an exhaustive discussion of language management as a useful concept by a self-evident analogy to 'health management' and a comprehensive overview of its theoretical origin and its central tenet as a process-based model. Besides, relations and comparisons to other theories, encompassing 'correction theory', 'markedness theory', and 'conversation analysis',

are adequately revealed during the elaboration on the key stages of LMT. Overall, the chapter is impressive in a clear and lucid way. For me, this chapter's extraordinarily sophisticated treatment of LMT only wavers slightly in two relatively minor points. First, throughout Chapter 1, the explicit distinction between 'language management' and 'language planning' is absent. Although avoiding setting boundaries can sometimes be a productive way to reach out, readers of this volume may be confused throughout. Second, concerning the position of LMT in relation to language policy and planning (LPP), it is probably inappropriate to position it as one of the 'schools' within the field of LPP (p.7). For one thing, it is inconsistent with the editors' own proposal for this volume that LM shall be tackled as a micro and macro intertwined process, which means LPP should be studied under LMT. For another, it collides with another contributor's belief in Chapter 2 that it is 'a reasonable position to take' (p.32) for LP to be studied under LMT.

Chapter 2 to 4 together discuss the historical origin of LMT (Chapter 2) and the development of LMT- based research in East Asia (Chapter 3) and Central European contexts (Chapter 4). Interestingly, the backstory that prompted researchers to articulate LMT is delivered in the form of the author's reminiscences (Chapter 2), complementing the plain theoretical origin account in Chapter 1. The conclusion that LMT is 'a substantially decent tool' (p.44) to reveal human's faculty to use language is drawn at the end of the chapter to echo the author's philosophical notion of Zeitgeist, to which we attribute what we consider important at a certain period or age, at the beginning of the chapter. Coincidentally, both authors of Chapter2 and Chapter 3 quote Neustupný's (1978) model of the 'Linguistics of language problems' (p.40& p.54) when mentioning the concept of 'correction' in linguistic behavior, although the purposes differ slightly. In Chapter 2, it is mentioned to stress the point that the notion of correctness dictates individuals to adjust themselves to norms, which in turn reinforces the norms and results in new norms. Whereas, in Chapter 3, the same theory is used to prove LMT as an approach grounded in the micro-level. To better serve this purpose, both the original figure of this model and an adapted figure for clearer understanding are illustrated.

Compared to the counterparts of Chapter 5 to7(empirical studies in East Asia), Chapter 8 to 10 (empirical studies in Central European) are relatively too dense for readers to read through easily, especially in Chapter 8, where a complicated language codification theory is introduced, and readers are bombarded with examples of orthoepic codification of German varieties. It would be probably intriguing for readers interested in German pronunciations but a bit too much to offer if one possesses no prior knowledge of either language codification or German language. Chapter 9 cautions that language change should not be taken as a one-way process, since 'destandardization' (p.179) and 'demotization' (p.180), both deriving from the underlying standard norms, are also involved in some processes. Whether or not the two processes happen depends on how the management process is undertaken. Chapter 10 still looks at the language management process but from a different angle of combining individual management with organization management by analyzing four recorded authentic dialogues during the language consulting service at the Czech Language Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences to exemplify the language management processes during the enquiries. Conclusions are made that the enquirer's intention determines whether the language management process would be a simple or complex one.

As gems of this volume, Chapter 11 and 12 together fill a lacuna in LMT research on the reflexive role of the researcher. By drawing on LMT to analyze the interactions between the researcher and the life story interviewees, the first generation *Zainichi* Korean women in Japan, the author of Chapter 12 discusses the possibilities of integrating LMT with methods of life story interview research, shedding light on how to better understand life

story interviews in a holistic way. This is not only an innovative application of LMT but also a practical methodological contribution for life story interview research. Comparatively, Chapter 13 touches on the role of the researcher in LMT research from a more theoretical basis by referencing different scholars, starting with the discussion of the role of the linguist to the ten contributions language management researchers can make. The linking role of the researcher is clearly advocated by distinguishing LMT as the micro-macro cycle and as the process cycle and by analyzing a case study of a research project at the German-Polish border. Besides, the author adds the final feedback stage to the processual model of LMT, considering this as a shortcoming of the model. Indeed, the LMT processual model should be understood as a circular or a spiral framework, since language management issues are reoccurring in daily life. However, I have some reservations here about the necessity of adding a post-implementation stage for evaluation/feedback to the LMT, since this stage is already outside the management process or if a lack of feedback is noted, a new LMT process starts.

In conclusion, this volume is a welcome addition to the literature that aims to support the notion of micro and macro as a continuum regarding language management and there is much to be learnt from the book, ranging from LMT itself and its applications to the role of the researcher in this area. It will prove useful for individuals, scholars and language planning institutions interested in language management issues. Like any book dealing with such an abstract but broad theme, it is not without its weaknesses. Readers may question why more details are not drawn from empirical studies outside of East Asia and Central Europe, say Australia, another well-established hub for the application of LMT, although undeniably the LMT approach is indeed rooted in the two of these regions. Perhaps we could look forward to this addition in the next edition.

Reference

Neustupný, J. V. (1978). *Post-structural approaches to language: Language theory in a Japanese context.* University of Tokyo Press.

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