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Tables of Contents, abstracts and guidelines are available at www.benjamins.com

Second International Language Management Symposium

Vít Dovalil

Waseda University hosted the Second International Language Management Symposium in early October 2011. Its organizers concentrated on norm diversity and language management in globalized settings. This two-day symposium followed the first conference of this kind in August 2008, which took place at Monash University in Melbourne and focused on the issue of noting the deviations from the norms and expectations as a precondition for starting language management processes.

Almost 50 participants from 21 universities participated in the 2011 symposium at Waseda. Most of them were researchers from Japanese universities (apart from the hosting one, for example, Kanda University of International Studies and Sophia University in Tokyo). Hidehiro Muraoka from Chiba University represented the Society of Language Management, of which he is chairman.¹ There were four participants from Charles University in Prague — Jiří Nekvapil, Tamah Sherman, Marián Sloboda and Vít Dovalil, and scholars from Monash University in Melbourne and other institutions in Asia and Africa. Overall, the contributors represented the places in which Language Management Theory has been developed and applied most actively — Japan, Australia and the Czech Republic.²

The organizers divided the program of the symposium into five sections. The first was devoted to norms and communication, the second to norms and standards. The contributions from the third section dealt with the dimensions of norms. The fourth section about norms and society was followed by the final section, in which the researchers discussed norms and education. The very fact that norms were the central topic is not surprising within LMT, because the language management processes, as has been advocated by many authors, start with the norms (or expectations) and the deviations from them. Another feature of LMT that could be systematically observed in the organization of the symposium consisted in interconnecting the levels of language management: Sociocultural (socio-economic) management is endowed with the broadest scope, which is the desirable

background for analyses of communication management. Communication management is, in turn, the precondition for the adequate research of the language management of linguistic structures.

Although the concept of norms ran through all of the papers presented at the symposium, it is not possible to claim that the scope of the topics appeared too narrow or over-specialized. Both simple and organized management were represented. The contributors applied the theory to the language used as a lingua franca (Tamah Sherman in her opening paper, for more details see below), or to the phenomena of code-switching and silence in Japanese-Chinese intercultural communication (Yoichi Sato). Lisa Fairbrother presented the language management in interactions which were full of inconsistencies and diverse norms in globalized settings in Japan. Issues of language ideologies as they interfere in the negotiation of norms were also the subject of discussion. Goro Kimura analyzed a dispute concerning the prohibition of Sorbian used in official situations when German-speakers were present. Language management processes were initiated on both sides by this prohibition — on the side of the Sorbs who were affected as well as on the side of the German-speakers in the given situations. The ideology played in Kimura's analysis both the role of the resource of the negotiation of communication norms, and of the constraining factor of this negotiation.

However, the theory is also developed by applications to situations which, at first glance, do not seem linguistic. Geoffrey Maroko analyzed citation practices in papers, whereas Aman Chiu dealt with editing practices of the publishing houses that need to tackle terminological issues of the Chinese language in the domain of information technologies. Keisuke Kamimura presented and analyzed difficulties in adjusting software that was supposed to be sold in local markets. Marián Sloboda concentrated on the issue of the choice of a local language in multinational companies' advertisements. These research topics are exemplified to provide evidence of the advantage of LMT which is able to take the socioeconomic roots of language problems into account systematically. The scope and the explanatory potential of LMT are enormous, which is not surprising because the experts research the behavior towards language as it appears in discourse. The theory has been developed within the qualitative paradigm. The bottom-up way of thinking is apparent, as well as the meta-linguistic nature of the management acts. In other words, an attempt is discussed to theoretically grasp very diverse meta-linguistic activities of language users. LMT distinguishes between utterances (language production and perception) on the one hand, and their management on the other.

The paper by Jiří Nekvapil and Jiří Homoláč, *Problems with "norms" in Language Management Theory*, was the only one focused primarily on the *concept* of norms (without data analysis). They drew upon the intellectual legacy of Jiří V. Neustupný and of the Prague School, including its critical reflection. However,

they also referred to more than merely the structural roots of norms. Norms are taken into consideration by Dell Hymes in his classical acronym S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G which depicts the components of speech precisely — scene and setting, participants, ends, act sequences, keys, instrumentalities, norms, and genres.³ The way norms work in social practice cannot be separated from the sociocultural features of the settings in which interactions occur and in which the norms are shaped/negotiated by interlocutors actively, not only accepted as given. The Hymesian model can be recognized in LMT in the concepts of sociocultural and communicative management, whereas the Prague School, due to its structural orientation, is visible in the concept of language management in its narrowest sense. Unlike the Prague School, LMT systematically allows for the dynamics of the social processes in which norms are constituted (and reconstituted). These processes are typically not consensual, which LMT takes into account by assuming power inequalities between the actors of these processes.

Vít Dovalil's presentation was based on these very grounds. He described and analyzed the decision-making processes in which the norms of Standard German are co-constructed at several Czech universities offering the Master in German Studies. From the sociocultural point of view, philological fields of study are characterized, among others, by the transfer of the knowledge of Standard German from the language norm authorities who are qualified experts in the field of German linguistics (both native and non-native speakers) to the students. As the research has shown so far, it is possible to collect such language management acts carried out by authorities which differ both from grammars/dictionaries and from the language used by professionally trained language users. The discursively constituted role, based on interactions of the teacher, is confirmed by students acting as norm subjects in the settings of the universities. They hardly dare object to the language management acts of the authorities. The findings that certain management acts of the teachers are not in accordance with Standard German norms are not relevant unless they are brought into the decision-making processes and enforced.

A similar application, although based on entirely different data, was presented by Tamah Sherman. She concentrated on situations in which languages are used as a lingua franca. She pointed out that definitions of a lingua franca based on the distinction between native and non-native speakers are not necessarily adequate. She provided evidence for the claim that using a language as a lingua franca does not mean necessarily being protected from, and free of, discriminatory practices. The management processes may be started by anyone who presents any more advantageous biographical features (e.g. longer stays in Anglophone sociocultural contexts, or graduation from English studies) in order to use them in the social networks with other non-native speakers of the respective language. Obviously,

social contexts in which the non-native speakers categorize themselves as lingua-franca speakers do exist. The features of the sociocultural and communicative management, however, distinguish these situations from the ones at the universities in the previous paragraph quite apparently.

Most of the authors of the other contributions were predominantly local researchers analyzing data related to various communicative situations in Japan in which Japanese — even as a foreign language — played the most important role. Miwako Ohba investigated how the atomic bomb victims in Hiroshima (*hibakusha*) talked about their drastic experiences in English. The use of English in these contexts enables a considerably larger number of people (including those coming from the USA) to hear the stories without the need for interpretation from Japanese. As a consequence of this sociocultural context, interesting differences between the testimonies formulated in English and those in Japanese were observed. Pacifism was emphasized much more intensely in the former, which was accompanied by stronger insistence on the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Another extreme situation — the earthquake of March 11, 2011 — was the topic of the paper by Hidehiro Muraoka. Obviously, this disaster affected many foreigners staying in Japan and caused various language management processes in very dramatic contact situations. As a result of the sociocultural management once again, these processes were influenced, for example, by different perceptions of the sense of order, which was rich in various deviations from the expectations and norms. These deviations were observable in the interactional sequences of these contact situations.

The symposium demonstrated that linguistic and communicative norms are characterized by considerable dynamics and diversity. In spite of these facts, LMT is able to describe these phenomena as they relate to one another and to locate them in the language management processes. This positioning is essential for orientation within these processes. Nevertheless, as emphasized by Jiří Nekvapil and Jiří Homoláč, researchers must carefully consider the fact that noting, which represents the first phase of language management, is not necessarily initiated merely by *deviations* from the norms, rather, any linguistic, communicative or sociocultural phenomenon can be noted. However, more research is needed.

Following Australia and Japan, the Third International Language Management Symposium will move to Europe, taking place in Prague in 2013.

Notes

1. For more details see the homepage of the Society www2.atword.jp/languagemanagement.

2. For more information about the theory and some application cf. recently Nekvapil, J. & Sherman, T. (Eds) (2009). *Language management in contact situations: Perspectives from three continents*. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang.
3. Cf. Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

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