

# Language policy

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## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

When I was first invited to speak at this symposium, and after I had recovered from the feelings of gratification, I started to wonder about a topic for my talk. For a while, I thought about in dealing with the potential limitations caused by the word "bilingualism" in the title. What about those of us who are interested in bidialectalism, or in multilingualism, or just in the existence of multiple varieties in the sociolinguistic repertoire of societies or individuals? It struck me that this is another case that where linguists have trouble using language. Charles Ferguson<sup>2</sup> made this point when drew attention to our regular difficulty with the common meaning of the name of our profession: "yes, I am a linguist, but that doesn't mean that I speak languages -- I study them." So while some of us pedantically make distinctions between the plurilingual competence of individuals and the multilingual patterns of societies, keeping "bilingual" and "trilingual" for cases where only two or three languages are involved, and even using "diglossia" only for two varieties of the same language, it did not seem worth devoting this precious time to rehashing old complaints about the failure of the general public of language users to accept the opinion of linguists on how language should be used. I simply adduce as the first example of how difficult it is to manage language.

On the same occasion, Ferguson (who was speaking at the first conference of the American Association for Applied Linguistics) reminded us of the two principal gaps in general linguistics: the failure to deal with language beyond the sentence, and the failure to deal with variation. In the ensuing in decades, the field of discourse studies has developed to tackle the first issue, and the field of sociolinguistics has concentrated on the second. In a loose sense, the study of bilingualism, originally focused in Leopold's classic work (1970) on linguistic aspects of the acquisition of two varieties, came to include the whole complex issue of choices between existing varieties. It can be seen, in other words, as encompassing more or less the domain of language policy, which I see as study of regularities in choices among varieties of language.

Language policy does in fact go further than this, for it includes not just the regular patterns of choice, but also beliefs about choices and the values of varieties and of variants, and also, most saliently, the efforts made by some to change the choices and beliefs of others. If you want to find out about the language policy of a speech community, of whatever size or nature, the first step is to study its actual language practices, in other words to describe this Dell Hymes (1974) called the ethnography of communication and what others call the sociolinguistic repertoire or the linguistic ecology. Fundamental to understanding language policy is the realization that all linguistic ecologies are complex contextualized repertoires of linguistic units of various sizes that may be seen as consolidating from time to time into recognizable linguistic varieties that are sometimes accorded in name or label.

Let me take a few minutes on this point. When we talk about national language policies, we are usually concerned with named language varieties. However, it is important to realize that these varieties are complex conglomerates of linguistic items, and that policy regularly deals with items rather than varieties (Mufwene 2001). Don't use that ugly sound, a mother might chide her child. That word should be banned, a teacher regularly complains to a class. Similarly, the changes made in language are regularly concerned with items: the lists of words published by language academies, the new spellings promulgated by governments, the correct pronunciation instilled by teachers, are concerned with the selection of individual items, although they may add up to the selection of named

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<sup>1</sup> This paper, which parallels but is not the same as the version spoken at the Symposium and omits the photos of the language manager, summarizes ideas discussed in Spolsky (2004).

<sup>2</sup> In a talk at the first meeting of the American Association of Applied Linguistics.

varieties. Thus, the issues of whether Serbo-Croatian was one language or two, or the dividing of Hindi and Urdu, or naming one of the languages of Belgium as Flemish or Dutch, become easier to handle if we do not simply try to work with named varieties.

## 2. Ecology

It is important also to realize that language and language policy both exist in (and language management must contend with) highly complex, interacting and dynamic contexts, the modification of any part of which may have correlated effects (and causes) on any other part. A host of non-linguistic factors (political, demographic, social, religious, cultural, psychological, bureaucratic, and so on) regularly account for any attempt of persons or groups to intervene in the language practices and the beliefs of other persons or groups, and for the subsequent changes that do or do not occur. A simple cause-and-effect approach using only language-related data is unlikely to produce useful accounts of language policy, embedded as it is in a “real world” of contextual variables.

A useful metaphor for the contexts is ecology, defined by Haugen (1971) as “the study of the interactions between any given language and its environment.” Language forms a cultural system (building on certain basic biological components such as design features derived from body shape and structural features that are determined by brain structures), a system of unbelievable complexity and magnificent flexibility (anything I say can be and is interpreted and misunderstood in myriad ways, but we more or less get by). We acquire these language practices in constant “constructive interaction” (the term from Oyama 2000) with our social environment, both human and natural, so that changes in language variables (and so in languages) are most likely to be associated with non-linguistic variables.

In studying language policy, we are usually trying to understand just what non-language variables co-vary with the language variables. There are also cases of direct efforts to manipulate the language situation. When a person or group directs such intervention, I call it language management (I prefer this term to planning, engineering, or treatment). The language manager might be a legislative assembly writing a national constitution. Or it might be a national legislature, making a law determining which language should be official. Or it could be a state or provincial or cantonal or other local governmental body determining the language of signs. It can be a special interest group seeking to influence a legislature to amend a constitution or make a new law. It can be a law court determining what the law is, or an administrator implementing (or not) a law about language. Or it can be an institution or business, deciding which languages to use or teach or publish or provide interpreters for. Or it can be a family member trying to persuade others in the family to speak a heritage language.

But language policy exists even where it has not been made explicit or established by authority. Many countries and institutions and social groups do not have formal or written language policies, so that the nature of their language policy must be derived from a study of their language practice or beliefs. Even where there is a formal written language policy, its effect on language practices is neither guaranteed nor consistent.

## 3 Components

Language policy deals not just with named languages and varieties but also with parts of language, so that it includes efforts to constrain what is considered bad language and to encourage what is considered good language. Language management may apply to an individual linguistic micro-unit (a sound, a spelling, or the form of a letter) or to a collection of units (pronunciation or a lexicon or a script) or to a specified, named macro-variety (a language or a dialect). Given that languages and other varieties are made up of conventionally agreed sets of choices of linguistic units, a policy-imposed change at one level necessarily is connected to all levels: switching a lexical item is a potential step towards switching a variety. Many language purists consider borrowing a word from another language to be the first stage of language loss. But this is not necessarily the case: a receptive and flexible language like English probably benefits from its ability to borrow words. *Language management* refers to the formulation and proclamation of an explicit plan or policy, usually but not necessarily written in a formal document, about language use.

The members of a speech community share also a general set of beliefs about appropriate language practices, sometimes forming a consensual ideology, assigning values and prestige to various aspects of the language varieties used in it. These beliefs both derive from and influence practices. They can be a basis for language management, or a management policy can be intended to confirm or modify them.

Language ideology or beliefs designate a speech community's consensus on what value to apply to each of the language variables or named language varieties that make up its repertoire.

The widest range of conditions can affect language policy. As Ferguson (1977: 9) put it, "All language planning activities take place in particular sociolinguistic settings, and the nature and scope of the planning can only be fully understood in relation to the settings." "Sociolinguistic setting" should be interpreted to include anything that affects language practices and beliefs or that leads to efforts at intervention.

The constraint on bad language is a common example of language policy. "Don't ever let me hear you say that word again!" the mother tells her child. "Watch your language! There are ladies present." the barman chides a customer. "You mustn't say 'ain't'!" the teacher nags her pupils. Basic to the process of correcting or trying to correct language usage is a widespread belief that parents or other caretakers have a responsibility to guarantee the successful socialization of their offspring by helping them to develop a variety of language that is useful for communication, by being intelligible, and that will lead to acceptance in desirable social settings, by not giving offense. Caretakers generally accept responsibility to help their offspring learn an appropriate or good variety of language. Governments also take on the task of managing bad language. In the United States, obscenity is constitutionally left to state or local government, but the Federal government has a law dealing with any obscenity that crosses or might cross state lines

Language management, constituting an effort by someone with or claiming authority to modify the language used by other speakers, depends on two fundamental beliefs, part of the common language ideology of many if not all societies. The first belief is that it can be done, that Canute can stop the waves, that speakers can be forced by law to avoid certain kinds of defined language. This is an *a priori* assumption in any effort at language management, though its truth turns out to be rarely borne out by the facts. The second belief concerns the nature of what should be controlled, what constitutes bad language. One common set of criteria for badness includes words or expressions that are obscene, profane, blasphemous, fighting words, or sexual. There is an opposing ideology, that there is no such thing as bad language. One form of language management, somewhat delicately labeled as "political correctness," has accompanied the growing liberal consciousness in many Western countries over the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Bad language is considered dirty and impure. Clean, uncorrupt, pure language is highly valued ideologically. As a general rule in language matters, the past is believed to be pure, and innovation is often suspected of corruption. Purism becomes important during a time of language cultivation and modernization, providing a criterion for the choice of new lexicon. Purism is closely connected with national feeling (Haugen 1987: 87). Keeping languages pure by excluding foreignisms became an important management task in Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was the central role of the language academies modeled on the Académie française (Cooper 1989). The eschewing of foreignisms proclaims linguistic and ethnic purity.

The reverse side of the coin is made up of policies the aim of which is to improve the language variety itself, by *cultivation* (Garvin 1973) or *modernization*. Here too ideological considerations came to play an important part. The criteria for good language come to be concerned not just with a felt need for a common norm with consequent communicative efficiency, but also with the same issues of group identity, including nationalism, that became fundamental to criteria for unacceptable language. In context, language policy, even at the level of corpus planning, is political. Language policy issues concerning innovation are regularly decided on puristic or political rather than pragmatic grounds.

Underlying purism is an understandable but ultimately harmful belief in the superiority of one's own tradition, nation, religion, or ethnic group. Understandable, because without it, one is cast adrift in a valueless system; harmful, whenever it is translated into action to cleanse one's society of otherness. The path from linguistic purity to ethnic cleansing may not be inevitable, but it is regrettably only too common.

#### **4 Towards a theory**

There are four main features to the theory of language policy that I put forward. The first is the tripartite division of language policy into language practices, language beliefs and ideology, and the explicit policies and plans resulting from language management or planning activities that attempt to modify the practices and ideologies of a community.

The second fundamental notion is that language policy is concerned not just with named varieties of language, but with all the individual elements at all levels that make up language. Language policy can apply to pronunciation, to spelling, to lexical choice, to grammar, or to style, and to bad language, racist language, obscene language, or correct language.

The third fundamental notion is that language policy operates within a speech community, of whatever size. The domain of language policy may be any defined or definable social or political or religious group or community, ranging from family through a sports team or neighborhood or village or workplace or organization or city or nation-state or regional alliance.

The fourth basic notion is that language policy functions in a complex ecological relationship among a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, variables, and factors. The relationship may well be causal, but that will often prove hard to establish. Even when we look at specific implemented language management decisions, we often find either no result (the failure of preachers to eradicate blasphemy or of teachers to enforce grammatical correctness, for instance) or unanticipated results (the way that reversing language shift or language revival activities produce novel, undesired forms of language).

## 5 Levels

Language policy in the family may be analyzed as language practice, ideology, and management. In many families a monolingual language policy (observable in language practice) will be the result of the members of the family having proficiency in one language alone. Even here, though, there will be policy affecting the choice of individual items (avoiding obscenity, for instance) and style (“Keep your street language away from the table!”). More complexity will arise when a second language comes into play, as a result of intermarriage or emigration or foreign conquest. In many families, there will be no explicit language management but simply choices based on practice and ideology. The bilingual home, with its bilingualism produced by intermarriage, is an obvious locus for the study of family language policy. Besides intermarriage, one of the main pressures on family language policy is immigration, whether to another country or to the city. In an immigrant situation, it is common for the children to take leadership in the socialization process.

Moving beyond the family, there are a large number of intermediate social groupings, such as the church or other religious organization, the village or other immediate neighborhood, the various kinds of marketplaces and other commercial enterprises, the larger demographic units such as towns and cities, the multiple workplaces, the schools and other educational systems, the social and sporting and ethnic and cultural clubs and organizations, the political parties, the contacts with local, regional, and national government, each of which may easily constitute a reasonable domain for exploration of language policy.

Of all the domains for language policy, one of the most important is the school. When and where schools exist, they take over from the family the task of socialization, a central feature of which is developing the language competence of young people. There are a number of basic questions that arise regularly in language education policy. First and foremost is the decision on the language to be used as *medium of instruction*. It is rare for children coming to school to have control already over the language or languages that the school system will want them to know. Especially as an effect of urbanization and immigration, children coming to school are likely to speak a number of different dialects or languages, while the school commonly selects a single language as its desired goal (Spolsky 1974).

Policies at the national level interact with less-studied and less-obvious policies occurring and levels below and above the nation-state. It is policy at the family level that finally determines language maintenance and loss, just as it is policy at the European Community level, which is starting to become a major influence in that part of the world. Language policy studies that focus only on the individual nation state and its centralized language planning are likely to miss many significant features.

Nationalism, with its search for national identity and Great Traditions, was a strong motivator for language management in the 19th-century. Both the French Revolution and German romanticism held a view of nationalism that assumed that a single unifying language was the best definition and protector of nationhood. Choosing an appropriate national language and purifying it of foreign influences was a major activity.

## 6 Virtually monolingual policies

A number of countries are constitutionally monolingual. Others are more or less monolingual in practice or ideology. A third of this group is made up of Arabic Islamic states, the modern constitution of which regularly proclaims Islam as the national religion and Arabic as the national language. A second grouping is the Romance one, a list on which Spain would also appear alongside France, Portugal, and Romania were it not for its post-Franco recognition of selected minority languages in autonomous regions. In fact, in many of the cases, the constitutional proclamation of monolingualism disguises much more complex practices and ideology, and is not necessarily the basis for language management activity.

Absent the simple fact of constitutional proclamation, it is much more complex to determine whether or not a country is basically monolingual. Arguments can be made that the United Kingdom, apart from its recent recognition of the place of languages in the former Celtic periphery, is just as monolingual as France, or that the United States, in spite of its large and diverse immigrant and indigenous minorities, is marked by monolingual English hegemony.

Looking at actual language practices, there are few countries that can claim virtually complete monolingualism. The most obvious is Iceland, whose population of 270,000 is reported to be monolingual in Icelandic. France is the paradigmatic case for strong ideology and management (Ager 1999). Although in earlier times the key concern of French language management was purification and diffusion of the language, for the last decade it has been fighting English (and especially American). Over the last few centuries, France has developed a vigorous language policy, the management of which is intended to support the ideological primacy of the French language in all of its glory and purity. How effective has French language policy been? Considering that it has been fighting the regional varieties since before the Revolution, it is a wonder that they still survive at all. Two hundred years of active language management should surely have been enough to destroy them completely. This is further evidence of the powerlessness of language management. The case of French thus produces a very difficult set of data for those who believe that language practice is easily managed.

With the possible exception of Iceland, monolingual polities turn out to be multilingual in practice, the monolingualism being evident in national ideology and government efforts to manage language, but there are competing forces- globalization in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century meant that national monolingual hegemony had to fight against the threat of a spreading world language, English. There is internal resistance too, provided by the continued existence and ideological support for the peripheral languages, reinforced by a human rights concern for the speakers of minority languages, whether autochthonous or immigrant.

The development of English into a global language is not the simple end result of language management. Rather, it reflects local and individual language acquisition decisions, responding to changes in the complex ecology of the world's language system. Because it is not under management, it is hard to predict the next stage. So far, national language management-- such as laws and agencies in France and Brazil and Russia trying to keep English out -- appears notably unsuccessful in checking it.

The spread of English is not the direct result of either wise or self-centered language management, but the global language is now a factor that needs to be taken into account in its language policy by any nation state (de Swaan 2001).

In the United States, while there is a similar absence of an explicitly organized and implemented language policy, and while there was also traditional opposition to the notion of establishing a language academy or any other administrative body charged with its development and implementation, the issue of national language policy has arisen historically on a number of occasions. From its colonial beginning, the American linguistic pattern was marked by diversity in language practices (Lewis 1980). The 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by rapid increases in immigration to the US, especially from Europe, but in two or three generations the majority of non-English-speaking immigrants had shifted towards English. This process was neither universal nor consistent, for it was balanced by an opposite tendency: "Two processes -- de-ethnization and Americanization on the one hand, and cultural-linguistic self-maintenance on the other -- are equally ubiquitous throughout all of American history," Fishman (1966: 15) concluded.

Some groups were treated differently. There was forced integration and Anglicization of Native Americans. Efforts were made in the 1890s to speed up the assimilation process, especially by teaching English, but this was unsuccessful. During the First World War, xenophobic feelings were increased by

war-induced nationalism and by the end of the war, positive attitudes towards bilingualism had been replaced by an widespread belief that it had little to contribute. Bilingualism became associated with inferior intelligence and lack of patriotism.

The wave of arguments in favor of monolingualism did not interfere with the continuation of heritage language loyalty, including home and community language use, the publication of newspapers, and the maintenance of bilingual programs into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cycles like this, with no evidence of equilibrium, suggest that we are dealing with conflicting tensions; any action towards one end quickly produces a counteraction in the other direction. In fact, beliefs about language choices and values tend to be inconsistent and inconstant, to vary with changes in the ecology, and to be partially at least open to influence of language practices and management.

The question that we are trying to answer is, does the United States have a language policy? If we look at language *practices*, the answer is far from simple. While most private and public business is conducted in English, there are many individuals and communities who continue to use other languages regularly in certain domains. If we ask about *beliefs* about language rather than practice, the answer too can be complex. Many people believe that English was or should be the official national language, but about the same proportion believe that neither the teaching of foreign languages nor bilingual education is a threat to English. If there is not a clear answer to be found in practices or in beliefs, language *management* at various levels and times reveal an equally multifaceted situation. This can be seen by looking at policies in education and in legal decisions (Del Valle 2003). They do not form a consistent and regular pattern. The 1964 Civil Rights Act provided a basis for the Federal Government to intervene in language management. For the next thirty years or so, however, most of the action and concern concerning language rights moved from Title VI to a law specifically intended to deal with the problems of those pupils described as linguistically disadvantaged.

It is possible to interpret this reluctance to get involved in language management as representing an underlying belief that this is something that government should not meddle with. It appears that negative programs -- the attacks on bilingual education, the rejection of programs that recognized the existence of Afro-American Vernacular English, the fear of Spanish spurring the various English-only campaigns, the long ignoring of the language of the Deaf -- and claims that it is only ignorance or stupidity or willfulness that prevents everyone speaking the approved variety of standard English, combine to firmly block any effort to develop a language policy that recognizes the diversity of American language practices.

A somewhat more consistent view emerges if instead of tracing the failure to provide formal support for schools taught in languages other than English, we ask about efforts made to deal with language-related impairment of civil and human rights. In both the United States and Europe, it has become accepted that there is a fundamental human and civil right for there to be no discrimination against an individual on the basis, among other things, of the language he or she speaks or does not speak. In its most rudimentary form, this led to the requirement that a person charged with a crime be told the details of the charge in a language that he or she speaks. At its most elaborate, in current European and United States practices, this entails the provision of government services in such a way that they are accessible to all, whether or not they speak or read the national language.

The impact of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act continued in various spheres without regard to the Bilingual Education Act. A major development was when, on Aug 11 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order (EO) 13166, intended "to improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency (LEP)." The order required every Federal agency to prepare a plan to improve access, and agency providing Federal financial assistance to develop appropriate guidelines. Implemented even partially, the Executive Order could well be one of the major language management decisions outside the education field. The fact that it is coming into force at exactly the same time that the Bilingual Education Act has been ended confirms the general argument presented in this chapter about the diversity and indeed ambivalence of US language policy. By the middle of 2002, most Federal agencies had completed and published their plans for implementation.

## **7 Factors affecting national policy**

Four principal factors have so far been presented as fundamental in determining the language policy of a nation: the sociolinguistic situation, the national ideology, the existence of English as a world language, and notions of language rights. In its language practices, the United States has been

and remains multilingual, with bilingualism and language shift the common fate of immigrant languages, and multilingualism maintained by new immigration. The common language belief system started off pluralistic and multilingual, went through an anti-immigrant and isolationist monolingual phase starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and continuing until the end of the Second World War, and is now in strong tension between pluralistic multilingualism on the one hand and resistance to Spanish monolingualism on the other. For the United States, as for other English-speaking nations, the third factor has the obvious effect of discouraging any effort to teach languages other than English; if everyone wants to learn it, why waste time on other languages?. The rights issue is increasingly important. While language management was generally left to states, whose policies reflected national beliefs, starting in 1962, the widespread implementation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, providing access to federally provided and funded services for persons with limited English proficiency, bolstered for a while by the Bilingual Education Act and theoretically continued in the English Language Learner programs of recent educational law, has been working to defend the language rights of those in the United States who do not speak English.

In sum, United States language policy continues to be complex and difficult to disentangle. Language practices, as long as immigration (legal and illegal) continues, will remain English dominant with large pockets of multilingualism. Language beliefs, forming not a simple consistent ideology but rather the contradictory ideas expected in a democracy, hold that everybody should learn English, but also that all remain free to learn and use whatever other language they choose. Language management remains uncentralized, the exception being Civil Rights driven programs to assure access to education and federal services for all.

With all its complexity, the language policy of the United States revealed an overarching monolingualism (the hegemony of a single national if not official language), with the large number of speakers of minority languages protected by language rights, or more precisely, by the application of civil rights to language, which emerged largely from the interpretation of courts, legislators, and bureaucrats of constitutionally protected civil rights for minorities, as part of the understanding of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

## **8 Language as a civil or human right**

Many countries of the world have a similar “monolingual but...” policy. They may name in their constitution or in their laws a single national or official language, but then modify the intolerance by proclaiming protection for one or more minority languages. Even in France, there are occasional signs of attention to the rights of speakers of previously ignored regional languages. The Peace Treaties signed after the First World War with protection for selected minorities in defeated enemy countries or in new states carved out of defeated empires in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, constituted the development of language rights. The Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations included provisions for rights for linguistic minorities in treaties imposed upon Austria, Hungary, Bulgarian, and Turkey and in setting up new nations in Europe and the Middle East. Any state signing the treaties agreed that all its nationals, including members of minority groups, should be free to use any language in private, in business, in religion, in the press or any publications, or at public meetings. The rights also included access to state organs. Appropriate interpreting and translation should be provided whenever necessary in court proceedings. In those towns and districts where there was a sufficient proportion of nationals with a mother tongue different from the official language, their children should be permitted to receive primary education through the medium of their mother tongue, provided at the same time that the learning of the official language could be made obligatory.

In the first half of the 20th century, then, growing international recognition of limited language rights for minority populations was starting to appear in the legislation and constitutions of nation-states which provide important models for the legal expression of language rights (Varennes 1996). The United Nations Charter adopted in 1945 proclaimed respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equality, and absence of discrimination. In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 2/1) included language as one of the criteria that might not be used for discrimination. The 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education allowed for the establishment of voluntarily separate educational systems offering education in accordance with the wishes of the pupils’ parents, including the use of their own language, provided that this did not prevent members of the minorities learning the culture and language of the community as a whole.

Starting about 1990, there have been an increasing number of international conventions and treaties asserting individual linguistic rights and the rights of linguistic minorities (Paulston 1997). The right to have a minority language used by public authorities where reasonable is now included in documents of the European Union (as part of the criteria for the admission of new states) and of the United Nations. At the same time, it remains cautiously limited: there must be sufficient speakers of the language, and it must not be too difficult for public officials to use the language.

Some historically and perhaps ideologically monolingual states have been persuaded or agreed to recognize in their constitution the linguistic rights of specific selected minority or indigenous groups. Recognizing the complexity of language practices in Europe, the Council nurtured an ideological consensus for the principle of multilingualism. It then carefully designed a system of language management that put the full onus on the independent member states to decide how much of the principle to apply to a selected group of their own languages. The slow pace of implementation shows that even this cautious approach is still challenging the nationalist ideology and traditional language policy of the member states (Nic Shuibhne 2001).

Summing up, in the latter part of the 20th century, language rights emerged as a major factor affecting national language policies. While the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the French Revolution turned out to support the notion of one nation, one language (assuming that to be the way to achieve equality), the notions of individual rights developed by the American Revolution and expressed in the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution were recognized to include an individual's freedom to choose a language. In the United States, this has supported access to education and services for those who do not speak the dominant language, English. In Europe, too, international and European treaties have established a number of conventions and covenants supporting the language rights of selected minorities. Essentially, though limited in many ways by the need to obtain ratification by sovereign states, these treaties encouraged freedom of language choice in private and in commerce, the right of linguistic minorities to use and teach their own languages, and the obligation of the State to teach its official language to all and to provide access to government services to speakers of other languages (Phillipson 2000).

Language rights have become by the end of the 20th century a major force, alongside the sociolinguistic situation, the drive for national identity, and the challenge of the global language, in the development of the language policies of nations.

The theory developed so far claims that language policy for any independent nation-state will reveal the complex interplay of four inter-dependent but often conflicting factors: the actual sociolinguistic situation, a set of beliefs influenced by national or ethnic identity claims (with the number of Great Traditions critical), the recent pull of English as a global language, and the even more recent pressure for attention to the rights of linguistic minorities. This theoretical model needs to be tested against actual cases.

## **9 Bilingual and multilingual countries**

The pattern in former French, mainly Arabic-speaking colonies has generally been an effort, not fully successful, to replace the colonial language with official Arabic. The effect of colonial rule is still stronger than the political ideology.

Many nation-states have their constitutions proclaim a single official or national language. Looking at each more closely, though, such a common characteristic disguises complexity in language policy. First, they have quite complex language repertoires, with indigenous or immigrant languages alongside the official language. In practice, various approaches have to be taken to deal with these languages and speakers, at local if not central levels. Proclaiming an official language suggests at the very least a requirement that the school system make it a priority to teach the official language to non-speakers. Second the choice of a single language sets different language management needs depending on the stage of cultivation. Nations that selected the colonial language had to build up a language education policy to handle the transition from the home language to the school medium; those that chose the local language needed to work on its cultivation and to teach it to speakers of other languages. Many polities that are constitutionally monolingual have already started to take measures to deal with the rights of individuals and groups with other languages. At the same time, all of them face the need to deal with the growing importance of English as a global language. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, monolingualism is no longer the simplest policy.

In many cases, the constitutional proclamation of a single state or national or official language is followed by a qualifying statement to do with the linguistic rights of recognized minorities. Many of them take this extra qualification from some earlier constitution (in former Soviet republics, for instance). Others are influenced by the movement towards the recognition of rights of linguistic minorities.

The monolingual nation state exists ideologically if rarely in observable language practice. In multilingual nations, the significance of two or three or more major languages is recognized. However, there is no reason to suspect that it will be this linguistic fact rather than people's perception of it that will be the driving force of language policy. In this chapter, we deal with nation states that have recognized not just the existence but also the claims of more than one language and have attempted to satisfy these claims by partitioning its linguistic space and assigning a portion to each.

The management of partition is generally determined demographically (applying to a specific set of citizens, such as speakers of a particular language or members of a particular ethnic group) or by locality (applying in preselected regions or in villages or towns which reach a criterion level of percentage of speakers of a specific language) or by function (dealing with national or local government, in public or private business, in education or in the media). Each of these or some combination of them occurs.

The Belgian model solves most of its problems by determining that one area of the country should use Dutch, another French, and the third German, leaving only one city, Brussels, to work out a more delicate language distribution (Deprez 2000). The same is largely true of Switzerland and India, with each canton in the former or state in the latter selecting its own preferred regional language. Ethnically diverse societies like Singapore accept that Chinese, Tamils and Malays will have social if not territorial spaces to use their own languages while using English when together (Xu & Wei 2002). Diglossic communities like Paraguay agree that Spanish and Guarani can be used for different functions, but also have some locality and class differentiation (Gynan 2001).

Multilingualism obviously produces pragmatic problems for central political control. While ancient and medieval governments could use interpreters and scribes to send occasional instructions to distant dependencies, modern active government is easiest when it can be conducted in a single language, providing translation services for as few others as possible. Simply from the point of view of efficiency, any government is forced to make some language management decisions.

From examples in so many different parts of the world, it is clear that maintaining multilingualism comes with a price.

## **10 Language policy as choice**

Language policy is about choice. It may be the choice of a specific sound, or expression, or of a specific variety of language. It may be the choice regularly made by an individual, or a socially defined group of individuals, or a body with authority over a defined group of individuals. It may be discovered in the linguistic behavior (language practices) of the individual or group. It may also be discovered in the ideology or beliefs about language of the individual or group. Finally, it may be made explicit in the formal language management or planning decisions of an authorized body.

At the most basic level, individual speakers and groups of speakers demonstrate a belief that some of these choices are bad or undesirable and that others are good or valuable. Growing up and becoming socialized, children are generally expected to learn how to differentiate between good and bad language. Their mentors and caretakers regularly take on the responsibility of assisting, first by encouraging the use of language that can be widely understood, and second by encouraging the use of language that is judged favorably. The beliefs that some variety of language is better than others and that it is possible to influence speakers to select the better variety are fundamental to language management.

However, language practices, beliefs, and management are not necessarily congruent. Each may reveal a different language policy. The way people speak, the way they think they should speak, and the way they think other people should speak may regularly differ. Looking at the language policy of established nations, one commonly finds major disparities between the language policy laid down in the constitution and the actual practices in the society. One is therefore faced regularly with the question, which is the real language policy? In many nations, one is hard-pressed to choose between the complex multilingual ecology of language use and a simple ideological monolingualism of constitutionally stated language management decisions.

The most realistic answer resides in language practices; look at what people do and not at what they think they should do or at what someone else wants them to do. Language management remains a dream until it is implemented, and its potential for implementation depends in large measure on its congruity to the practices and ideology of the community.

## **11 The context of language policy**

Looking at language policy ecologically has two different implications. First, it implies considering all the varieties of language that make up the sociolinguistic repertoire of the community being studied, and not just the named varieties that are considered official or that represent specific ethnic groups. The failure to recognize that the language spoken by most Belgians is neither French nor Dutch, but dialects of either can lead to a serious misunderstanding of the nature of the gap between school and home languages. The sociolinguistic repertoire then will include various linguistic items, variables, and varieties, but cross-linked with the appropriate non-linguistic factors with which they co-exist: demography, location, topic, function. The second implication is to realize that language policy exists in the wider social, political, economic, cultural, religious, and ideological context that makes up human society.

Without taking these contextual factors into account, any description of language policy will be severely restricted.

## **12 The conditions for language policy**

In analyzing a large number of various cases (Spolsky 2004), I have found four main forces that coexist with the various kinds of language policy. Forces may be too strong a word, with its implication of causality. Rather, they may be better thought of as conditions that co-occur with policies. The first of these was the sociolinguistic situation: the number and kinds of languages, the number and kinds of speakers of each, the communicative value of each language both inside and outside the community being studied. Here, a critical factor turned out to be not so much the factual situation as common perception of the situation. Thus, a community will be found to ignore a number of language varieties that are marginalized or that are used by marginalized members of the community. Many putatively monolingual communities turn out on closer analysis to be multilingual in practice.

The second condition had to do with the working of national or ethnic or other identity within the community. In modern nation-states, the symbolic value of what is felt to be the national language is a critical force working to try and direct language management. Schools are expected to teach the national language, citizens are expected to use it in public life. Counteracting this unifying force can be the identity values associated with languages used by ethnic or religious sub-groups within the nation, many of which might aim to have their language recognized alongside or instead of the national language. Once empowered, a former minority (whether numerical or in terms of influence) regularly asserts the primacy of its own language.

If we follow the analysis by Bobbitt (2002), it may well be that the concentration on national concerns in language policy is about to become outdated or reduced. Bobbitt, basing his analysis on the development of warfare, proposes a series of stages in the development of constitutional states. The Thirty Years' war led to the development of the Kingly State, superseded by the beginning of the 18th-century by the Territorial State, in which the monarch became, the 'first servant of the State.' The French Revolution and Napoleon produce a move to the state-nation, transformed to the nation-state, in which the national identity which underlies so much of the language policy that we have been studying achieved its importance. There was conflict between democratic, fascist, and communist views of the nation-state, but all seemed to have agreed on the contribution that language choice had to make to national identity. With the defeat of fascism and, half a century later, the collapse of communism, history did not in fact end, but the nation-State was transformed into what Bobbitt labels the Market-State. One version, the Washington model, is no longer concerned about nationalism. A second, the Tokyo model, continues to nurture national identity and cultural exclusivity. A third, the Berlin model, attempts to maintain the welfare aspects of the nation-state, but now has to face up to the challenges of globalization and immigration. Bobbitt recognizes also the changes of the post-September 11 world, noting the threat of the virtual, non-territorial Market-State terrorist reality. Challengeable as Bobbitt's model might be in its particulars, it raises intriguing questions about the changing relevance of national interests in language policy.

The third force or condition had to do with changes that have taken place in the world in the last few decades as a result of globalization, and the consequent tidal wave of English that is moving into almost every sociolinguistic repertoire. Associated with it is the instrumental value of gaining access to an economically advantageous network by developing proficiency in the language of widest communication. In the last few decades, this force has multiplied in effect and narrowed in language choice, so that currently most societies feeling the effects of globalization are also moving rapidly to acquire greater proficiency in the global language, English.

This has various effects on national language policies. In some, it becomes the target for language management aimed to fight its influence. In others, it becomes a natural goal for language acquisition planning and the potential replacement for less well-cultivated indigenous languages. Even when it does not affect language management, it affects language practices.

The fourth condition has to do with the gradually increasing recognition that language choice is an important component of human and civil rights. Slowly, there are signs of the weakening of national autonomy. The ratification of international covenants or the influence of supra-national organizations, respectful though they remain of national sovereignty and territorial limits, have led to a growing value for linguistic pluralism and an acceptance of the need to recognize the rights of individuals and groups to continue to use their own languages. As a result, more and more nations include in their constitution or in their laws and regulations affecting language provisions recognizing a limited set of rights for the speakers of languages other than the national language. The limitation is generally territorial: a language is recognized as deserving of rights when a significant proportion of the population living in a defined region speaks it. It may be demographic: rights are much more likely to be granted to indigenous groups than to immigrants, and even less likely to people marginalized as foreign workers. There can be a functional limitation: states are more likely to accept responsibility for providing access to state services for speakers of other languages than they are to provide educational service in the language. At most, a state might permit a minority language community to provide its own education, provided usually that it teaches the national language alongside the minority one.

A final dimension to this complex interplay of forces is the growing recognition that human and civil rights require attention to the problems of those who do not have control of the dominant language of a society. It is widely accepted that this involves teaching the dominant language to all citizens, providing access to minimal public services in minority languages, and permitting linguistic minorities to work for language maintenance. There are those who argue that the maintenance of linguistic diversity is just as much the responsibility of states as is the maintenance of biodiversity, while others hold that everyone should be free to choose which language to speak and so free to choose not to speak their minority language.

With the complexity of factors concerned, and with the certainty that they will pull in different directions, it is not surprising that a simple theory of language policy has not yet achieved consensus.

There are other factors that occur regularly, but they can generally be subsumed under one of these four headings. For example, a language policy motivated by the search for economic advantage will generally fit under the first condition, as will the desire for access to specific written resources. A language policy motivated by fear will probably be part either of the second or the third, depending on whether it is fear of an internal or external group.

### **13 Predicting effects**

The challenge in developing a theoretical model is to attempt to predict cases that have yet to be studied. Can one suggest some hypotheses? Essentially, the generalizations in (Fishman 1971) look hard to beat. A nation with a consensual Great Tradition and an associated cultivated language will be most likely to have a monolingual language policy. A nation with competing Great Traditions and associated cultivated languages will endeavor to work out a territorial or demographic compromise if it is practical. A nation without established great traditions and cultivated indigenous languages will generally continue to use its colonial language, or attempt to build the role of an international language, especially English. Without a strong ideological urge to maintain identity even at the cost of social and economic isolation, most small weak languages will not have the power to encourage their speakers not to shift to the nearest available stronger language.

In all of this, the potential success of language management will depend on its congruity with the language situation, the consensual ideology or language beliefs, the degree to which English has

already penetrated the sociolinguistic repertoire, and its consistency with a minimal degree of recognition of language rights.

#### **14 Will the real language policy stand up?**

The implication of this analysis is that the real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than its management. Unless the management is consistent with the language practices and beliefs, and with the other contextual forces that are in play, the explicit policy written in the constitution and laws is likely to have no more effect on how people speak than the activities of generations of schoolteachers vainly urging the choice of correct language.

There is another complication that needs to be taken into account: several parties in the community may each have their own conflicting policy. There are cases, like the United States, with differences between federal and state policies, and with strong interest groups working to develop their own desired policies. For this reason, it makes sense to look generally at the policy revealed in the language practices of the society.

The existence of language management suggests that the putative language manager has recognized some inconsistency between the desired state of affairs and the actual. In most states there is likely to be continuing tension over language choices, and constant pressure on the part of some people to modify the practices of others. If language management is to do more than simply record either the present situation or some idealized but unrealizable state of affairs, it must represent some ideologically and practically achievable modification of current language practices. That brings us to the next major question.

#### **15 Can language policy succeed?**

Students of language policy fall naturally into two main groups: the optimists who believe management is possible, and the pessimists who assume that language is out of control. The record seems to favor the pessimists, for there are comparatively few cases where language management has produced its intended results. There are striking failures, such as the fact that reversing language shift activities, unless managed by a combination of government power and ideological strength, generally failed to prevent continued attrition.

Consider some cases. The two centuries of determined French language policy have had important effects, but they have not managed to destroy the languages of the periphery, or to replace the indigenous languages of the former colonies, or to fight off the growing threat of English. A century of politically backed and governmental efforts to revitalize Irish has succeeded only in increasing knowledge but not use of the language. Rigorous (indeed brutal) Soviet language policy succeeded in spreading literacy and weakening many indigenous languages, but the collapse of the Soviet Union has left space for reinvigorated claims for many of these languages to establish their own dominance. While revernacularization and revitalization of Hebrew have achieved their initial goals, the revived language is quite different in character and the cost in terms of loss of other languages has been high. In many former colonies, the efforts to establish indigenous languages for official use have turned out to be increasingly problematic. In states with large-scale immigration, failures to adopt language policy to recognize the new sociolinguistic situation have led to major social problems.

The record is not good, although it can be argued that the failures of language policy are no worse than the failures of economic policy. But the goal of this talk has not been to advocate language policy, but attempt to understand what it is and how it might be influenced. It has tried to identify the structure and nature of policy, and to explore the interactions between its various components. The knowledge developed will not show how to manage language, but help understand what is involved in such management.

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