

“UNPLANNED” LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

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INTRODUCTION

Naturally enough, the field of language planning, as its name suggests, has concentrated its efforts on the description and practice of planned language development. This is after all its *raison d'être*, to provide future oriented, problem-solving language-change strategies to meet particular language needs. This orientation means that language planning is one of the key descriptive topics in applied linguistics, bringing together as it does theory from a variety of disciplines and putting that into practice. Grabe and Kaplan (1992) estimate that the applied linguistics aspects of language policy and planning make up one of four categories that accounts for about 45 percent of the items published in the field.

Over the years, language planning has evolved from a field that focused primarily on planning in developing societies (e.g., Rubin and Jernudd 1971), to one that promoted such studies for all societies (e.g., Cobarrubias and Fishman 1983), to a mature and even self-critical view of the field itself (e.g., Tollefson 1991). Despite this growth and development within the discipline, one matter has not received much attention: the “unplanned” side of language planning.

Why, one might ask, should one look at “unplanned” aspects of a field when there is still so much to be done in the planning arena. Four reasons can be offered. First, the planned and “unplanned” features often coexist in the same situation. As the unplanned aspects can interact with and change or pervert the planned, the language planner ignores the unplanned aspects of a situation at his/her risk.

Second, the absence of some activity, in this case language planning, often provides information about the very phenomenon in which we are

interested. In a diglossic situation, where two or more languages are in use, typically for different purposes, the uses of those languages will often highlight important social and political variables: If one of those languages is involved in “planning,” then a knowledge of the other language situation will be essential to doing work in the planned language. It can be argued that the general failure of English language planning in Papua New Guinea or the Solomon Islands (see, Jourdan 1990) is due to the neglect of the role of pidgin (Tok Pisin/Pijin).

Third, language policy and planning decisions are power related. As language is a medium everyone uses, planned language change, especially at the “macro-level,” has the potential to affect everyone in a society. Luke, McHoul and Mey point out that “the development of language plans has tended to reflect political and economic imperatives of particular social groups rather than what could be construed as linguistic or cultural concerns *per se*” (1990:41). Top-down planning (see Kaplan 1989) for some situations and groups of people may leave or create unplanned or misplanned outcomes for others. In some cases (e.g., Arabization in the Maghreb [Souaiaia 1990]) it may be politic to espouse a language planning objective to legitimize control without any intention of implementing it to any degree which would threaten that control.

Finally, as language is a skill all humans acquire with some reasonable degree of competence, it is a medium in which everyone has a stake and can claim to have some expertise. Most people therefore do not hesitate to get involved with small scale, “micro-level” language planning exercises although they themselves, and also language planners, may not classify the local activities as such. There is much in the way of unplanned language policy and planning going on all around us, but this often goes unrecorded by language planners. These four reasons suggest that “unplanned” language policy and planning are an important, but under-examined, aspect of the discipline.

DEFINITIONS

Although the field is generally called language planning, the use of this term in its generic sense is a bit confusing since it actually refers to several different processes. Various definitions (e.g., Cooper 1989:30) and models (e.g., Haugen 1983) have been proposed to describe the field, but for this review the important distinctions to be made are those related to *language policy*, *language planning*, and *language-in-education planning*. As Kaplan (1990:9) suggests, these terms are not always differentiated in use or practice.

Language policy represents the decision-making process, formally stated or implicit, used to decide *which* languages will be taught to (or learned by) *whom* for *what* purposes (cf. Cooper 1989:31ff, LaPonce 1987). In Haugen’s model, policy planning is related to ‘selection and “codification” procedures.

Frequently however, language planning and language-in-education planning occur with little or no overall language policy direction.

Language planning can be defined as the implementation of language policy, to the extent practicable, across *all* the possible domains of language use referred to in the policy. In Haugen's model, language planning is most closely related to language cultivation that includes the subcategories of "implementation" and "elaboration." However, what happens when language policy is effectively implemented through language-in-education planning without much thought for language planning?

In a review of language-in-education planning, Ingram (1990:53) has defined this term as the ideals, goals, and content of language policy that can be realized, to the extent they are relevant, within the educational system. The definition makes the normal assumption within the field that language-in-education planning is an extension of policy addressed specifically to education. What happens then when language-in-education planning has little or no policy basis or general language planning support other than that determined by grass roots educators themselves?

In the three sections that follow, examples of each of these major aspects of generic language planning are examined, looking at the influence and impact the unplanned aspects on those areas that were planned.

"UNPLANNED" LANGUAGE POLICY

Language is a sensitive issue in Malaysia, and discussions of language (e.g., to publicly question the use of Malay as the sole national or official language) can lead to charges of sedition. While the historical roots in the racial disturbances of May 1969 make it easy to understand why language is such a sensitive issue in Malaysia, the status of Malay also makes it difficult for the government to discuss, or make new, language policy. Planning for Malay is covered by the government Education Enactment Bill of 1971 that has resulted, by 1983, in Bahasa Malaysia being the medium of instruction for all students. However, as Gaudart (1992) shows, the lack of national policy for the explicit of other languages has not hindered their development in schools where there has been extensive language-in-education planning. Despite this growth of languages other than Malay, without a policy basis, the intended role and future of these languages, generally and in relation to Malay, is uncertain.

Ozóg (1993:68) illustrates this point farther when he suggests that it is largely the Malays who have become monolingual because of the National Language Policy. The policy, while designed to help Malays, may in the long term have hindered their development because of their lack of access to English. The difficulties inherent in the open discussion of some aspects of language mean that

the government must promote the study of languages other than Malay primarily in economic terms rather than as a matter of policy development.

“UNPLANNED” LANGUAGE PLANNING

Several articles on the language planning process for bilingual education Northern Territory (Australia) have described, from different perspectives, the consequences of *non language planning*, specifically the lack of a commitment to bilingual education in the broader context. Bilingual education in the Northern Territory was mandated through an Australian Commonwealth government policy directive to give “Aboriginal children ... their primary education in Aboriginal languages” (14 December 1972), and was implemented through language-in-education planning in several primary schools. Russo and Baldauf (1986:313), however, have characterized the lack of a general language planning context as rendering the bilingual programs uncoordinated and misdirected language development efforts. Sommer (1991:130) suggests this analysis misses the point; the political representatives and the administration responsible for implementation were planning—but towards entirely divergent goals. The point being made in both papers is that there was no agreed upon language plan within which the language policy could be implemented through language-in-education planning. This lack of a general language planning framework has also meant that the evaluation of these bilingual programs has not been appropriately contextualized, resulting in most Aboriginal bilingual language programs being improperly labelled as failures (Eggington and Baldauf 1990).

Baldauf (1982), in providing a general overview of the language situation in American Samoa, suggests that the introduction of English there via television was primarily a *language-in-education planning* process, based on an educational policy decision taken by the Governor in 1961. As there was no wider language planning or consultation, the effects of this decision on the community in a language planning context were unplanned. Huebner (1989) describes the results for English and Samoan language literacy of this language-in-education planning as reflected in the two Samoas (Western and American). He concludes that these two related communities came to see literacy benefits differently, either as the maintenance or strengthening of the existing social organization (Western Samoa) or as a foundation for increased economic opportunities (American Samoa).

Kaplan (1990) notes that in New Zealand a broad national review of the curriculum has revealed a language problem that has been relegated to the education sector for solution. He presents the dilemma as follows:

[I]n an environment in which the central government has not recognised the causes of the language problem, the likely effects of various solutions, and so on, it is predictable that any solution proposed by the education sector is likely to be too narrow and

further likely to be unimplementable except in the most rudimentary sense because the resources necessary to resolution are not available to the central government, not having planned at that level (Kaplan 1990:9).

According to Peddie (1991), New Zealand has a situation in which a number of separate developments suggest the value of having an overall policy. While the government realizes that such a policy would have social, political, and economic ramifications, policy development has been located within the Ministry of Education, and this could lead to the policy being limited to the education sector.

“UNPLANNED” LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION PLANNING

Although the state of Arizona in the U.S. did for a time—until it was thrown out by the courts—have a state “English only language policy, there is no general policy concerning foreign language teaching or its funding for public schools. The Arizona State Board of Education has issued a mandate, without legislative backing or finding, requiring Arizona’s elementary schools to provide foreign language instruction in grades 1 - 8 beginning in 1991-2 (Rodriquez 1992). However, schools/districts were left on their own for implementation. This case study illustrates some problems of “*unplanned*” language policy and “*unplanned*” language-in-education planning for the development of school-based foreign language programs.

CONCLUSIONS

These examples suggest the importance of the unplanned’ aspects of language policy and planning. As the “unplanned” faction has a major effect on what being planned, language planners need to consider the problems raised by this lack of planning, and scholars need to document more thoroughly its effects. This hidden dimension is probably especially true at the ‘micro-level” because there is less awareness of language planning at this level and because such planning is ongoing and therefore commonplace.

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Baldauf, R. B., Jr. 1982. The language situation in American Samoa: Planners plans and planning. *Language Planning Newsletter*, 8.1.1-6.

This article provides a historical overview of the language planning situation in American Samoa. In particular it highlights the way language-in-education planning was implemented

without any real consideration of its effect on the broader language community.

- Eggington, W. G. and R. B. Baldauf, Jr. 1990. Towards evaluating the Aboriginal bilingual education program in the Northern Territory. In R. B. Baldauf, Jr. and A. Luke (eds.) *Language planning and education in Australasia and the South Pacific*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters, 89-105.

Evaluating bilingual programs in the Northern Territory (Australia) indicates that some of the ineffectiveness found for such programs is due to the narrow educational (i.e., *language-in-education*) measures used to evaluate these programs. The authors argue the programs need to be seen in a wider *language planning* context.

- Gaudart, H. 1992. *Bilingual education in Malaysia*. Townsville, Australia: James Cook University. [South East Asian Studies Monograph No. 33.]

Language is a sensitive issue in Malaysia, particularly at the policy level. Given the lack of public pronouncements, one might even wonder whether bilingual education exists in the national education curriculum. This volume shows that it not only exists, but exists in many officially sanctioned forms. The volume describes the history of language education in Malaysia and the current implementation of the language curricula.

- Ozóg, A. C. K. 1993. Bilingualism and national development in Malaysia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. 14.59-72.

Until the communal pressures of 1970, bilingualism was a feature of Malaysian education. This paper looks at how bilingualism has contributed to national development.

- Peddie, R. 1991. Coming—ready or not? Language policy development in New Zealand. *Language Problems & Language Planning*. 15.25-42.

Compared to Australia, language policy in New Zealand is emerging piecemeal, without any clear central planning and without much of the data needed for sound policy development. The paper provides an overview of the situation to date.

- Rodriquez, C. 1992. Informal language planning for elementary school language development: The case of Arizona. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*. S/9.1-12.

This article documents the struggle to implement a primary school foreign language-in-education policy without an explicit state language policy or agreed upon method of implementation. Without access to additional funding to facilitate language-in-education planning, schools/districts have had to devise their own language-in-education plans.

Sommer, B. 1991. Yesterday's experts: The bureaucratic impact on language planning for Aboriginal bilingual education. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*. S/8. 109-134.

Sommer discusses the impact of bureaucratic interference in the bilingual education process and the way in which this can shape the language consequences of even the best language planning efforts. This article graphically indicates the need for language policy and planning to include all the critical players in the process, lest they hijack it for their own purposes.

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