Lecture 8
Language Planning and policy

Approaches to Language
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+ Definitions

- Language planning: deliberate language change; conscious efforts to change the linguistic behaviour of a speech community (Holmes, 2008; Mesthrie et al, 2009)

- The term was introduced by Haugen in the late 1950s: It can include anything 'from proposing a new word to a new language' (Haugen 1987: 627)

- Wide variety of activities: introduction of new labels for fruit, the change of spelling systems, the development of national languages and standard dialects, the role of minority languages in education, the selection of official languages

- Focus on specific language problems: language planners develop a policy of language use → aim to solve a particular problem in speech communities

+ Definitions

- Language policy: official policies resulting from language planning

- 'Language policy refers to the more general linguistic, political and social goals underlying the actual language planning process' (Mesthrie et al: 371)

- Language planning & Language policy: areas of sociolinguistic inquiry

+ Definitions

- Linguists' attitude towards language planning: Language change is possible BUT language planning may not be advisable: 'It can be done, but it should not be done remains a common attitude '(Fishman 1983 cited in Mesthrie et al: 372)

- Emphasis on the descriptive nature of linguistics as a science: linguists have often approached language planning (prescriptive characteristics) with suspicion; Language planning execution: politicians and lay people

+Types of Language Planning

- Corpus planning: concerned with the internal structure of the language

- Typical activities : devising a writing system for a spoken language, spelling reforms, coining new terms and publishing grammar books

- Central aspect of corpus planning: **language standardisation → creation and establishment of a uniform linguistic norm**

+ Corpus planning: Language standardisation
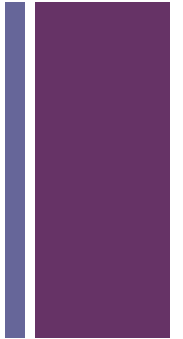
- Not all languages show the same degree of standardisation; different types/stages of standardisation (Mesthrie et al: 372):

- Unstandardised oral language: no writing system has been devised, e.g. Gallah (Ethiopia), Phuthi (Lesotho)

- Partly standardised or unstandardised written language used mainly in elementary education: high degree of linguistic variation in syntax & morphology, e.g. most of the American Indian languages.

+ Corpus planning: Language standardisation
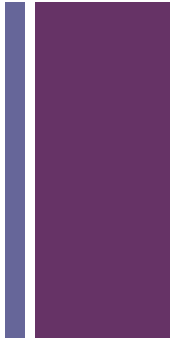
- Young standard language: used in education and administration but not in science and technology at a tertiary or research level, e.g. Luganda (Uganda), Xhosa (South Africa), Basque (France/Spain)

- Archaic standard language: used widely in the past but lacks vocabulary and registers for modern science and technology, e.g. classical Greek, classical Hebrew, Latin

- Mature modern standard language: used in all areas of communication (science and technology at a tertiary level), e.g. English, French, German, modern Hebrew

+Types of Language Planning

- Status Planning: refers to conscious efforts to change the use and function of a language (or language variety) within a speech community.

- The allocation of new functions to a language affects the role a language plays within a particular society:
  - Medium of instruction
  - Official language
  - Vehicle of mass communication
  - Language of international communication

+ Status planning

- Example:

Hebrew as a medium of instruction in Jewish schools in Palestine from the end of the 19th century : revival of Hebrew as a common language used in everyday communication. Before: classical Hebrew was used only in prayers & in religious or scholarly texts

Functions of a language

- Language-planners : many possible functions a language can occupy in society (Mesthrie et al: 373-374).

- Official: the use of a language 'as legally appropriate language for all politically and culturally representative purposes on a nationwide basis, e.g. in Ireland both Irish and English have official status.

- Provincial: the use of a language 'as a provincial or regional official language. In this case, the official function of the language is not nationwide, but is limited to a smaller geographic area' (Stewart 1968; cited in Mesthrie et al, 2009), e.g. in the Canadian province of Quebec, French is the only official language (since 1974), while both English and French have official status in the other provinces of Canada.

- Wider communication: the use of a language 'as a medium of communication across language boundaries within the nation (lingua franca)' (Stewart 1968; cited in Mesthrie et al, 2009), e.g. Swahili in Kenya and Tanzania, Hindi and English in India.

Functions of a language

- International: the use of a language 'as a major medium of communication which is international in scope, e.g. for diplomatic relations, foreign trade, tourism, etc.' (Stewart 1968), e.g. in medieval Europe, Latin was the major medium of international communication. Today it is English.

- Capital: the use of a language 'as a major medium of communication in the vicinity of the national capital. The function is especially important in countries where political power, social prestige, and economic activity is centred in the capital' (Stewart 1968), e.g. the provinces in Belgium have either Dutch or French as a provincial official language. The capital Brussels, however, is bilingual.

- Group: the use of a language 'primarily as the normal medium for communication among the members of a single group, such as a tribe, settled group of foreign immigrants, etc.' (Stewart 1968), e.g. Jamaican Creole functions as a group language among Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Britain.

Functions of a language

- Educational: the use of a language 'as a medium of primary or secondary education, either regionally or nationally' (Stewart 1968). Example: in Norway, the local dialects are widely used in primary education.

- School subject: the language 'is commonly taught as a subject in secondary and/or higher education' (Stewart 1968). Example: French is taught as a school subject in most German high schools.

- Literary: 'The use of a language primarily for literary or scholarly purposes' (Stewart 1968). Example: Latin was used as the main language of literary and particularly scientific writing in Europe until the early 18th century.

- Religious: 'The use of a language primarily in connection with the ritual of a particular religion' (Stewart 1968). Example: religions such as Islam and Judaism require the use of a sacred language (Arabic and Hebrew respectively) for the recitation of religious texts and prayers.

+ Functions of a language

- Mass media: the use of a language in the print media and on radio and television. Example: in Israel, the government determines how many hours should be broadcast in Hebrew, Arabic and foreign languages.

- Work place: the use of a language as a medium of communication in the workplace. Example: although German is the main language used in German factories, Turkish, Greek, Italian and other immigrant languages dominate in certain areas of production-line work.

+ Corpus planning & Status planning interaction

- Interaction between corpus planning & status planning: The allocation of new language functions (status planning) may requires changes in the linguistic system (corpus planning), e.g. the development of new lexical items

- Example: the use of Hebrew as medium of instruction in Palestine → change in language status: need to add new lexical terms relevant to the teaching of school subjects such as chemistry, physics and biology (Mesthrie et al, 2009)

Other types of Language Planning: Prestige planning

- **Prestige planning**: main aim is to create a favourable psychological background to facilitate the success of specific language planning activities

- Hebrew: high prestige as the traditional religious language → explicit prestige planning unnecessary

- Prestige planning: often a prerequisite for status planning

- Example: diglossia cases → when the promoted language has previously been limited to low-culture functions → improve the prestige of the language (to make the promoted status changes socially acceptable)

+ Other types of Language Planning: Acquisition planning

- **Acquisition Planning**: increasing the number of users – speakers, writers, listeners, readers – of a language
  - Literacy education (e.g. teaching the Maori language to children in New Zealand)
  - Second & foreign language education efforts
  - Examples: cultural institutions, e.g. the British Council, the Goethe Institute, focus on promoting the learning of English and German as a second/foreign language in other countries

The process of Language Planning

■ Four interrelated stages (Haugen, 1966, 1987):

1. Selection: choosing the variety or code to be developed; choose certain linguistic forms or language varieties over others, and promote them as being 'the norm' (e.g. the choice of an official language)

2. Codification: standardising its linguistic or structural characteristics; the creation of a linguistic standard/norm for a particular linguistic code

- 3 stages: a. graphisation (developing a writing system: alphabetic?), b. grammatication (deciding on the rules/norms of grammar), c. lexicalisation (identifying the vocabulary)

The process of Language Planning
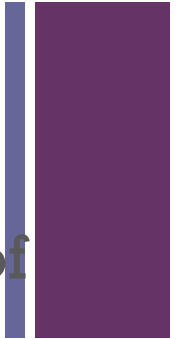
3. Implementation: social & political implementation of the decisions made in the stages of selection and codification

- Implementation: production of books, pamphlets, newspapers and textbooks in the newly codified standard, its introduction into new domains: education

- Selection & codification: linguistically trained people are involved, language academies vs. implementation: the state

The process of Language Planning

4. Elaboration: terminological and stylistic development of a codified language (communicative demands of modern life: talk about new concepts, ideas)

- Main focus: the production and dissemination of new terms, lexical enrichment strategies (lexical modernisation)

- Example: Hausa, an Afro-Asiatic language spoken by approximately 50 million people in West Africa

- 3 strategies are used for lexical modernisation:

■ 1. Borrowing (from Arabic or English) 2. Extension of the meaning of a native term 3. Creation of new terms (neologisms).

+ Planning and the Rationale Choice Model

- Language planning types & processes: they describe 'what' language planners do, and little attention is paid to the 'how': how do language planners arrive at their decisions?

- Systematic approach to this question: the 'Rational Choice Model'

+ Planning and the Rationale Choice Model

- ■ Theoretical proposal: the use of language(s) in society can be rationally and systematically planned (Mesthrie et al, 2009)

- ■ Similar to economic planning

Identify goals; how can these goals be achieved? Predict & monitor outcomes and consequences

+ Planning and the Rationale Choice Model

■ Language planning: decision-making method; a rational choice between alternative solutions

■ Five important stages of the decision process:

1. Identification of the problem and fact-finding

2. Specification of goals (development of a language policy)

3. Production of possible solutions, cost-benefit analysis of the alternative solutions and rational choice of one solution (decision-making stage)

4. Implementation of the solution

+ Planning and the Rationale Choice Model

5. Evaluation of the solution: comparison of predicted and actual outcomes

(Meshrie et al: 380)

- Language planning application: solve language problems

- Identification of the problem forms: the first crucial step

+ Planning and the Rationale Choice Model

- Language planning (rational decision-making): it should ideally be based on a detailed sociolinguistic profile of a country (fact-finding), e.g. national censuses, sociolinguistic surveys to investigate the number of mother-tongue speakers, number of second- language speakers, patterns of language choice and maintenance, language attitudes

+ Difficulties

- Fact-finding techniques: national censuses and/or large-scale sociolinguistic surveys

- Financial constraints: large-scale sociolinguistic surveys are expensive and time-consuming

- Questionnaires: problems with question phrasing, e.g. 'what is your mother tongue?' Is your mother tongue the language(s) you learned first, the language(s) you know best or the language(s) you use most? Is your mother tongue the language you identify with (Mesthrie et al, 2009)?

+ Difficulties

- National census questionnaires have changed radically over the years (examples): difficult to obtain a clear picture of changing patterns of language use within a society for policy purposes.

- Example: Australian Census; language-related questions have changed throughout the 20th century:

-1921: Can you read and write; 1933: If you are unable to read and write English, can you read and write a foreign language? ; 1947-1971: no language-related questions; 1986: (a) language used in the home, and (b) self-assessed ability to speak English.

+ Difficulties

- Cost-benefit analysis (useful in language planning): identify, quantify and evaluate the monetary consequences of different business alternatives (Thorburn 1971; cited in Mesthrie et al); CBA: social policy, health policy and language policy→ non-material consequences need to be considered

- CBA difficult to be used in language planning:

a. Long-time -frame for language-planning decisions (several decades)

b. Benefits generally not calculable in monetary terms

Example: Cost (?); e.g. Bilingualism in Belgium (French/Dutch) costly enterprise vs. social unrest

+ Difficulties

- Main agents of language planning activities (assumption): governments and government-authorised agencies

- Criticism: African academics view it as Eurocentric, not relevant to African experiences of language planning

- Developed countries: language planning initiated & implemented at government level

- Africa: language planning is carried out by non-governmental institutions; decisions are usually not rationally based on sociolinguistic fact-finding

+ Difficulties

- Language planners: Language planning is 'a messy affair, ad hoc, haphazard, and emotionally driven' (Cooper 1989: 41; cited in Mesthrie et al: 385)

- Language planning can be conducted by various institutions: language academies, ministries of education, churches, language societies, pressure groups and individuals

- Example of non-governmental language planning process : the successful efforts of the feminist movement to deal with forms of linguistic sexism, e.g. the use of generic *he* and *men* as well as the use of *man* in compounds

+ Acceptance

- ‘acceptability criterion’: the probability that the proposed corpus and/or status changes will be accepted by a given society

- Two approaches to language planning: a. the instrumental approach, b. the sociolinguistic approach

+ Instrumental approach

- **Instrumental approach**: languages are viewed as tools for communication; imperfect in their natural state

- Main aim of language planning: methodological improvement of the linguistic system → linguistic efficiency (i.e. easy to learn and use), communicative adequacy, uniformity

- However: the symbolic value of a language as an expression of group solidarity & identity is ignored

- Propaganda, political power & authority: change any opposing language attitudes

- Language planning: a mere technical, linguistic exercise (Linguistic engineering)

Sociolinguistic approach

- **Sociolinguistic approach**: focus on the social and symbolic context of language use & the importance of language attitudes

- Effective language planning: not considering purely linguistic questions alone; it is essential to understand the social, cultural, political and historical variables & have knowledge of language attitudes and the direction of social change in a given society

- Therefore: Political scientists, economists, sociologists, educationists and anthropologists are also important in language planning

Language planning, power & ideology

- Why is a sociolinguistic approach to language planning important? 'language-planning activities often form part of a wider social engineering and are employed to achieve non-linguistic goals, such as socioeconomic modernisation or national integration. In such cases, linguistic choices are made for purposes other than narrowly linguistic ones, and language planning becomes central to the attainment of more general political goals' (Mesthrie et al: 387-388)

- Example: early 20th century → Chinese intellectuals claim that written Chinese was difficult to learn and use; widespread literacy was viewed as the necessary prerequisite for the spread of technology and science → facilitate the modernisation of China's society

Language planning, power & ideology

- Chinese script reform: contribution to social change

- Proposals for script reform: a. development of a simplified, phonemic script based on the spoken standard language, b. simplification and standardisation of the complex Chinese character script (1964: the language reform committee published a list of over 2,000 simplified characters)

Language planning, power & ideology

- 'Assumptions and beliefs about what kind of linguistic order is beneficial for a community or nation influence the formulation of language-planning goals' (Mesthrie et al: 389)

- (4 ideologies that underlie the development of language policies: **linguistic assimilation**, **linguistic pluralism**, **vernacularisation** and **internationalisation**

- **Linguistic assimilation**: everyone should be able to speak and function in the dominant language of the community or nation. the most common model for language planning

- Monolingualism: cost-efficient way to development and economic progress vs. multilingualism

Language planning, power & ideology

- ***Language policy and language rights***

- In the 1990s the notion of language rights (or linguistic human rights) became influential in language policy research and practice, and challenged existing ideologies of linguistic assimilation. Language rights can be considered to form a subset of cultural rights, and in 1996 the Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights was signed by UNESCO and a number of non-governmental organisations in Barcelona, Spain.

Language planning, power & ideology

- The most fundamental rights are stated in Article 3: the right to be recognised as a member of a language community, the right to use one's own language in private and public, and the right to use one's own name.

- Article 3 also recognises collective language rights: the right to education in one's own language, the right to have access to media in one's own language, the right to interact with the government in one's own language. Whether these collective rights can be met usually depends on the size of the speech community in a given territory, i.e. only if there are sufficient numbers of speakers will it be feasible for governments to offer mother tongue education.

Language planning, power & ideology

- In 1996 the Linguistic Society of American published a detailed list of language rights, applicable to the United States. This list constitutes a good starting point for discussion: 'At a minimum, all residents of the United States should be guaranteed the following linguistic rights:

- A. To be allowed to express themselves, publicly or privately, in the language of their choice.

- B. To maintain their native language and, should they so desire, to pass it on to their children.

Language planning, power & ideology

- C. When their facility in English is inadequate, to be provided a qualified interpreter in any proceeding in which the government endeavours to deprive them of life, liberty or property. Moreover, where there is a substantial linguistic minority in a community, interpretation ought to be provided by courts and other state agencies in any matter that significantly affects the public.

- D. To have their children educated in a manner that affirmatively acknowledges their native language abilities as well as ensures their acquisition of English. Children can learn only when they understand their teachers. As a consequence, some use of children's native language in the classroom is often desirable if they are to be educated successfully.

Language planning, power & ideology

- E. To conduct business in the language of their choice.

- F. To use their preferred language for private conversations in the workplace. G. T o have the opportunity to learn to speak, read and write English.'

(Mesthrie et al: 390-391)

Language planning, power & ideology

- **Linguistic pluralism**: emphasis on the multilingual reality of societies; 'coexistence of different language groups and their right to maintain and cultivate their languages on an equitable basis' (Cobarrubias 1983: 65; cited in Mesthrie et al 2009: 391)

- Example: India; 16 languages are officially recognised: only English and Hindi are used nationwide

Language planning, power & ideology

Internationalisation & **Vernacularisation**: the status assigned to the indigenous languages of a country

- **Vernacularisation**: selection and restoration of an indigenous language(s) as official language(s), e.g. Papua New Guinea: two indigenous languages (Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu) have official status alongside English

Language planning, power & ideology

- **Internationalisation:** the selection of a non-indigenous language of wider communication as an official language or medium of instruction

- Assumption: modernisation through westernisation and goes together with linguistic assimilation

- Postcolonial countries: adoption of the language of the former colonial power

- Internationalisation: most evident in Africa; English is an official language in 52 countries/territories, French in 29 countries, Spanish and Arabic in 24 countries, and Portuguese in 8 countries

Language planning, power & ideology

- **Case studies:** See Holmes (2008) (106-111)

+ Recap

- Prescriptive nature of language planning and policy

- Types and processes of language planning (corpus, status, prestige and acquisition; selection, codification, implementation, elaboration)

- Models and difficulties

- Language planning, power & ideology

References

- Haugen, E. (1966). *Linguistics and language planning*, in W. Bright (ed.), Sociolinguistics: Proceedings of the UCLA Sociolinguistics Conference, 1964. The Hague: Mouton, pp. 50–71.

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- Holmes, J. (2008). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics.* London: Pearson Longman.

- Mesthrie et al (2009). *Introducing Sociolinguistics.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Further reading

- For further reading:

- Bright, W. (1992). Language Policy. International Encyclopedia of Linguistics Vol. IV:310-311.

- Cooper, R. L. (1989). Language planning and social change. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.