Language documentation and language policy

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1. Introduction: What is language policy?

Language policy is any decision that is made about language. Policies may be conscious or unconscious, explicit or implicit: for example, state education policy may not mention language at all, but may assume that the medium of education is the national language. Language policy can be planned or unplanned, but is no less a policy for being unthinking (e.g. 'benign neglect' of indigenous languages). Language policy can be formulated and implemented at any level: for example, some language decisions might relate only to punctuation, whereas a broader national policy might focus on which language(s) are officially recognised for use in national or political life. Decisions or actions that affect language use may be overt or covert, in that they may not necessarily be specifically or originally about language, but may affect language use (for example, which journal to publish an academic paper in).

1.1 Levels of language policy

Language policy occurs at all levels of society. When considering language policy we tend to think about it at a national level in the first instance, but policy at other levels is just as important.

At an international level, UNESCO has become very supportive of endangered languages, as can be seen from their website on intangible cultural heritage.[1] The European Union also supports linguistic diversity and funds measures to support indigenous minority languages in Europe.[2]

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[1] See http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00136.

[2] For example, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages http://www.eblul.org/, the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning http://www.mercator-research.eu/ (which hosted the 2008 Foundation for Endangered Languages conference) and the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity http://www.npld.eu (all accessed 2009-12-10).

If there is a degree of autonomy or regional government in a country, language policy may be formulated at regional level. Institutions also have language policies, which may be unstated – for instance, at my university our lectures are generally in standard English (except perhaps when teaching another language), and we expect students to write essays in reasonable academic English, even when discussing other languages, dialects and registers.[3] A school will have a language policy in terms of which language(s) are used as the medium education, and which languages are taught as subjects.

A local community will undoubtedly have a language policy which regulates norms and expectations of language use, which will probably not be overt. Community language policy usually 'just happens' as a result of social interaction, societal norms and often unspoken ideologies. Social groups or networks are major drivers of language policy for members of those groups. In urban centres in many countries there is currently a considerable amount of innovation in language use driven by young people's social groups.

Families too have language policies, which again are probably not conscious unless, for instance, parents from different language backgrounds have discussed whether or not they want to bring up their children bilingually. Such conscious decisions are relatively uncommon, but of course language practice in the family is a key factor in language maintenance and language endangerment.

As individuals we all have our own language policies. We may, for instance, decide that we want to learn a heritage language or a language of wider communication. We may decide that we want to go to a university where a particular language is spoken, which may require intensive study and testing. We may decide to learn a particular language in order to get a better job. Our policies may not necessarily be logical or effective: for example, we may attend a language class but not devote sufficient time to practice: a case of covert policies defeating overt ones.

It is these kinds of issues that drive language policy at all levels; it is therefore important to raise awareness of the kinds of choices that are being made. I use the word 'choices' in a broad sense, because choices are not necessarily freely made. Many people experience constraints regarding the language(s) or varieties they use in particular contexts (again, both overtly and covertly). It is therefore essential to make people in the communities that we work with aware of what is happening with language in their everyday lives.

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[3] During my sociolinguistics class 2009 we discussed how all language varieties are in theory equal and can be developed to express any meaning. One of the students asked if she could write her essay in texting language – but even if the tutor accepted that, the university authorities and other examiners might take a dim view.

1.2 Recent examples of top-down language policy

Kazakhstan is one of several former Soviet states where a Turkic language is spoken. Kazakhstan was part of the old Soviet Union and since 1940 had used the Cyrillic writing system, which is used for Russian, in line with Stalin's policy to have a common writing system for the whole Soviet Union. Prior to 1923 Arabic had been the main language of literacy, after which Kazakh in a modified Roman script was used. In 2007 the post-Soviet government decided to switch to the Roman writing system, which can be seen as an ideological decision to align the country more with the West, and with Turkey, than with the old Soviet bloc. The decision to implement the switch (giving Kazakhstan its fourth alphabet in the past century) was taken despite the not inconsiderable costs involved (e.g. in changing signposts, reprinting school materials, re-educating the population, etc.): the overall cost is estimated at $300 million, and the decision had been postponed since the 1990s for this reason[4] (see also Spolsky 2004: 30, Landau 2010). There is also concern to maintain the Kazakh language, as in several other countries in the region such as Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan. In the Soviet era there was considerable immigration from Russia, which resulted in a shift from Kazakh to Russian. As in many places in the world, English is seen as valuable for international communication, so the Kazakh education authorities are trying to develop a trilingual system which values the old national language, the heritage language and a useful international language.

   In the Seychelles there is a situation that is common to many former colonies. Both the colonial languages, English and French, had been used for education rather than local or indigenous languages. Most people in the Seychelles speak a creole which has French as the lexifier. In response to concerns about educational achievement, the government invited linguist Iman Makeba Laversuch from Freiburg University to advise on language education policy. In common with many linguists and educationalists, Laversuch (2008) recommended that education should be through a language that most of the people knew, and recommended education through Creole. The government duly implemented this recommendation, but found that parents were increasingly unhappy: parents did not think that Creole was a 'proper language' or prestigious enough for education. Even though children showed a marked improvement in educational achievement, parents still felt they would rather have their children educated through standard French or

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4 http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090407.shtml   (accessed 2009-12-10).

standard English. We tend to find that endangered languages too have low status and that people do not think they are suitable for use in education.

In France in 2008 there were debates about whether regional indigenous languages should be recognised for education, in government life etc. This caused heated public debate regarding regional versus national identity. A compromise was eventually reached whereby a clause was inserted into the constitution stating that regional languages were a valuable part of the country's heritage, but the principal clause stating that 'the language of the republic is French' remained unchanged.

This debate is relevant to other contexts because in many countries a large number of people are, in essence, disenfranchised because they do not speak the official languages, and so are unable to take part in public and political life.

2. How is language policy relevant to language documentation and description?

As can be seen from the discussions above, language policy permeates every aspect of people's lives, and so linguists need to consider policy issues as soon as they start researching, e.g. contact with communities may depend on who is seen as having the authority to make decisions on language use. A baseline sociolinguistic survey should include questions on language attitudes. This entails considering political factors. Languages often decline because communities are marginalised, which in turn relates to language rights and human rights.

As linguistic researchers we need to recognise that we are not invisible. When we are in a community, often the very fact of being there and studying a language which nobody has previously thought was important can make people think 'maybe there is something to this language after all, perhaps we ought to value it'. We inevitably have an effect on the communities we study, especially if they are small communities, which is quite likely when we are studying small, endangered languages. If we claim to be impartial with regard to language policy and do nothing, then the language will continue to decline. If we accept that we have an effect, then we also have to be principled in being aware of our effect. Whether or not we think we are experts on language policy we have a certain prestige, and people may start acting on what we say. We may also well be called on to advise on policy, again at all levels. I will describe two examples from my own experience.

An example at the level of individual language policy happened in 2007 when I had to have a blood test (I have a medical condition which I have endeavoured to learn more about). As the nurse was preparing my arm I said

something which must have demonstrated some knowledge of medicine, as she asked "are you a doctor?" I replied "only of linguistics". She then told me that her husband was from Uganda and spoke a minority language, and asked my advice on whether they should bring up their child bilingually. I explained to her that the vast majority of research indicates that full functional bilingualism is correlated with improved results in education (I felt that as a medical professional she would value scientific evidence).

At a top-down level, after finishing my PhD I was invited to write a 'position paper' on the state of the indigenous language in Guernsey, Channel Islands. The paper described my findings of increasingly positive attitudes towards the indigenous language and concern for language loss, and made some policy recommendations, which I had discussed with language activists. These findings expressed 'common-sense' local knowledge, but had not previously been quantified; the input of an external academic was seen as enhancing legitimacy and carried more weight than the views of activists. The recommendations were implemented and the island government is now actively promoting indigenous language revitalisation: a complete change from the previous lack of interest at an official level.

2.1 A few considerations and issues

Fewer than 4% of the world's languages have any kind of official status in the places in which they are used. It is quite likely that the languages we study are not recognised by the governments of those countries, so if we are interested in maintaining linguistic diversity we need to think about what kinds of strategies would be most useful in order to protect and maintain those languages; this may require engaging with local political and cultural contexts.

The chances of success of policies cannot be assessed without reference to culture, belief systems, and attitudes about language (Schiffman 1996). Language policy cannot be looked at in isolation from any kind of other policy, or from the culture of the country. Attitudes about languages are key to why people are giving them up and not speaking them to their children. It is therefore essential to find out what the people we work with believe about language use, what they speak, why they speak it, and so on. In advising a government on making language policy it is very important that people understand what the policy is, why it is being made, and for there to be support for that policy. Policies which may be thought of as enlightened may fail if there is a lack of public support, as the Seychelles example shows.

It is also difficult to implement an effective policy without adequate resources. Unfortunately, this is often the case, especially in Africa and Asia

where often positive-sounding rhetoric about teaching minority languages and mother-tongue schooling, is contradicted by a lack of materials and teacher training to support the aims: another example of overt policies being thwarted by covert ones. A mismatch of rhetoric and resources can occur in more developed countries as well: for example, in the UK teaching the government has advocated teaching French in Primary schools without providing extra training or resources.

3. Frameworks of language policy and planning

This section presents an overview of theoretical frameworks regarding language policy and its implementation. Policy and practice are often discussed in vague terms and the two are frequently conflated, even in academic papers. Articles about language policy in a particular place frequently launch into detailed descriptions of practice, without necessarily discussing the strategies and the decision-making process behind it. The UNESCO website includes a number of declarations, e.g. the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and minutes of international meetings. It is all too easy to assume that things will happen because declarations have been made, but of course they do not happen without careful planning, resourcing and implementation.

It is also surprisingly rare for language policy to be evaluated, and there does not seem to be a particular model that is commonly used for evaluation. This leads to a lack of knowledge about whether measures are actually effective. There is therefore a lack of effective implementation, as Romaine (2002) points out.

In Table 1 I distinguish between 'Policy' and 'Planning'. Policy comprises positions and principles: why we are doing this? What do we believe about our position? What strategies are there for implementing decisions? Such decisions are often taken in what is called a top-down manner, at governmental or perhaps regional government level.

Under the heading 'Planning' I include the more concrete measures for the implementation of policy decisions. This distinction is shared by other researchers (for example John Walsh (personal communication, November 2008)), but of course, this is a field where not everybody agrees. It is easier to look at language planning in more detail because it has a more developed description and framework than language policy (although Bernard Spolsky has been developing a framework for language policy which I will return to later).

Table 1: Policy and planning

POLICY	PLANNING
Positions Principles	Concrete measures
Decisions	Implementation
Strategy	

The term 'language planning' has some unfortunate 'baggage' in terms of negative connotations (e.g. Tollefson 1991, Williams 1992). The field developed after the Second World War when many formerly colonised countries were becoming independent. Language planning was therefore associated with post-colonial language and literacy policy, especially the choice and standardisation of national languages. Many multilingual countries have taken the route of choosing a national language under the mistaken impression that the imposition of one language will unify the state. Such a policy tends to discourage linguistic diversity, and in many cases these policies were not beneficial to minority or endangered languages.

In the last 20-30 years such policies have been increasingly criticised for treating multilingualism as a problem. Since the 1990s there has been a growth in interest in language policies which view linguistic diversity as a 'good thing' and which try to support minority and endangered languages. Spolsky (2009), Nekvapil (2006) and some others prefer to use the term 'language management' rather than 'language planning' in order to demonstrate that these more enlightened policies are different from old-style promotion of a monolingual ideology. However, in this paper I continue to use the term 'language planning' because it is still in common use and 'language management' is not, as yet, so well recognised.

According to Spolsky, language policy has three components: language practices, language beliefs and language management (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Components of language policy (adapted from Spolsky 2004, 2009)
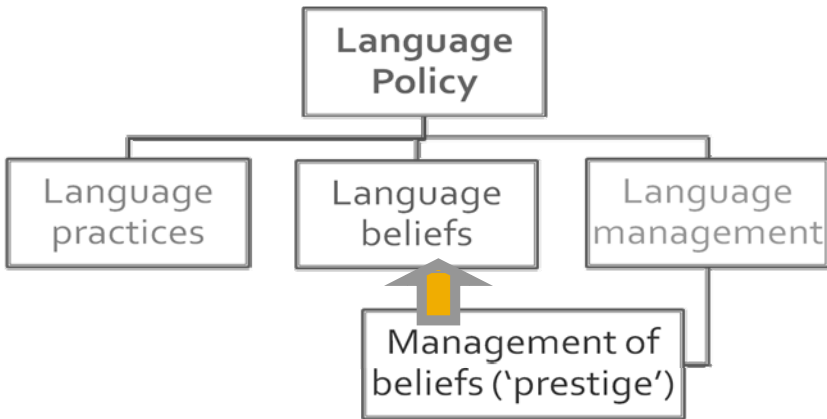
Language management is one component of language policy, reflecting my distinction between decisions and implementation.

3.1 Policy and implementation

Language *practices* are what people do with language, including which languages are used, permitted or prohibited in public (or even in private). Language *beliefs* are attitudes towards language or language varieties, and which language(s) people think should be used, how they should be used and in what circumstances; this includes perceived distinctions between language and dialect, which is very much part of language policy. As mentioned above, beliefs and attitudes are key elements in the successful implementation of language policy; managing (or attempting to influence) beliefs thus becomes a vital aspect. I have therefore added an extra step to Spolsky's model: language management feeds back into language beliefs. At this point the drawback of this model becomes apparent in that it is static; there is no indication how to move language policy forward. The relationship between beliefs and practices (or behaviour) will be discussed below.

The most commonly accepted framework of language planning/management is shown in Figure 2. This framework originally consisted of two categories: corpus planning and status planning, but the latter has been further differentiated over the last fifty years.

Figure 2: A framework of language management/planning (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997)

1. Corpus planning

2. Status planning

3. Language-in-education (or acquisition) planning

4. Prestige planning

Category (1), corpus planning, attempts to modify language itself whereas categories (2)–(4) are attempts to modify the environment in which that language is used. The term 'status planning' was originally used to cover all the more societal aspects of language planning/management, but has now been divided into three distinct elements: Status, Language-in-education, and Prestige planning. As Fishman (2006) points out, it is difficult to implement any of the categories without overlap, but to avoid confusion each will be discussed in turn.

3.1.1 Corpus planning

Corpus planning may be the most familiar to linguists, as we often engage in it even if we do not call it by that name. Corpus planning consists of description and management (or manipulation) of the language itself. Corpus planning includes:

- selection and elaboration of a variety for standardisation

- graphisation and orthography

- modernisation; selection and innovation of terminology

- codification: e.g. the production of dictionaries, grammars, and learning materials

The reason, in language policy terms, why people want to develop their languages is because written languages are generally held in higher esteem than ones that are not written. It is common to hear people say 'X is not a proper language because it is not written down.'

Creating a written form for a previously unwritten language is often referred to as 'reduction to writing', because variation and diversity within a language is often lost when it begins to be written. Bielenberg (1999) argues that as indigenous people go about the process of deciding on a written standard, they must first be aware of the possible implications that result from how value-laden the concept of literacy is.

The first issue is the choice of writing system, illustrated in the example of Kazakhstan given earlier. Many communities will have a choice of possible scripts due to history, religion, tradition, languages of wider communication and so on. Sometimes communities want their language to look similar to a language of wider communication because it will facilitate literacy in both languages. Cherokee, a native American language, has an indigenous writing system which was developed in the 19th Century, but many people now are using a Roman writing system because it is easier to write with a keyboard, which in America usually uses English-language conventions. In the case of Cherokee and numerous other minority languages, writers who were educated through English have problems using accents or diacritics, which are difficult to find and use on an English-based keyboard.

Conversely, sometimes (the same or other) people want an endangered language to look different in order to develop a distinct identity for it and its speakers. Kloss (1952) introduced the term *Ausbau* (German for 'building out') for this tendency, which seems to be increasing worldwide. In the *Ethnologue*[5] the number of languages listed is increasing although we know that language diversity is decreasing. The main reason is that more and more varieties previously viewed as dialects are being recognised as languages in their own right. This is a trend that corpus planning can intensify.

Standardisation can cause problems because endangered languages typically have considerable regional variation. Is it necessary to promote one language as standard, and if so whose? How would it be chosen? This may cause friction within the community or communities that use a language (or language family). Should a 'standard' try to unite varieties, possibly pleasing nobody? Who decides? 'When it comes to the politics of standardising a language, the evaluative labels that people attach to varieties of a language become very important.' (Kamwendo 2005: 155). In one situation that I know, people from the most ethnolinguistically vital area could not understand that people from another area were actually proud of their own regional variety, which was considered less prestigious elsewhere and so was in danger of being omitted from a 'unified' standard.

As linguists, we also need to be aware that standardisation inevitably causes a decrease in dialect diversity. Some communities decide that if they develop a language for education they only want to use pure elements of that language (e.g. some Quechua communities: see Hornberger & King 1996). Many endangered languages have taken on elements from contact languages, including languages of wider communication. These elements may be widely

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[5] www.ethnologue.com (accessed 2009-12-11).

used, but activists or language planners frequently decide that they do not want to include them. In other cases activists may want to make their language more relevant in the modern world, and in such cases new terminology is often highly influenced by the dominant language, which can in turn lead to structural influence through calquing.

If a language is spoken on both sides of a political border, different languages of wider communication may be used on either side of that border, possibly with different writing systems. Which one should be used for the minority language?

Speakers may come to see a standardised version as the 'correct' language, even if corpus planners' intentions are not prescriptive. Part of the purpose of teaching endangered languages in schools is to enable children to 'get in touch with their roots' and speak it with their grandparents. However, it is not unusual for divergence to develop between younger speakers who have learnt the unified version through education, and older native speakers of 'authentic' varieties (Grenoble & Whaley 2006). Sometimes the grandparent gets the impression that they 'don't speak it properly' or there is miscommunication, both of which inhibit the reestablishment of intergenerational transmission.

Spelling is a related topic which can fill whole books (e.g. Vikør 1993, Sebba 2007), as is the issue of whether or not speakers/learners wish to add or develop new terminology. This is something that all languages have to address: e.g. there was no word for 'computer' in English until about 100 years ago, and at first it meant something quite different from its modern meaning. If a language is to be taught in schools, or mother-tongue education is to be introduced, school subjects will require scientific or mathematical terms – who is to decide them?

Issues in developing writing systems also include the end use and users. Using a writing system is a very important issue which is sometimes forgotten: who is it for? And what are people going to read or write? There is little point in developing a writing system for a language if there are no newspapers, books or any learning materials, and no funding to subsidise their development (endangered-language publishing is rarely profitable for publishers).

Linguists are often involved in these issues – it is one of the areas of language planning where we are most likely to be asked for input. Linguists tend to look at the mechanics of the language: we list phonemes, and try to establish what we think is a transparent, logical writing system. What we often do not look at is what people are going to use the writing system for. This is where corpus planning overlaps with prestige: what people believe about what their language is for is an important factor in the success (or not) of a writing system. Sometimes (as in English, for example) communities are

very attached to highly illogical writing systems, but most efforts to reform the English spelling system have failed because users will not accept new or different usages, or jettison 'iconic' features which symbolise their language.

3.1.2 Status planning

'Status planning' refers to the choice of which languages are going to be used in public life, and the processes of deciding and achieving legal/official status. 'National' and 'official' languages mean different things in different places. In some countries a national language is the only language that is used in government, and an official language is often a language which is not a local language but may be a useful language in wider communication. For instance, English is an official language in many countries around the world although it is not a local language. However, in some countries a 'national' language may refer to a widely used language which is not recognised as official (e.g. many creoles). Status planning also includes whether or not endangered or minority languages are recognised, and in what domains (areas of life) these languages are/should be used. Some governments are happy for minority languages to be used in the home in private spheres, but not so keen for them to be used in official spheres. Activists may therefore campaign for domain expansion, e.g. use in courtrooms and schools. The advantage of trying to get a language recognised officially is that when trying to do corpus planning, document a language, or revive or revitalise a language, having government support can provide more resources than groups or individual activists. For a government to state that it recognises a previously disregarded language can give the speakers of that language more confidence in using it all spheres. Often speakers may feel embarrassed about using a language in public if it is seen as having low status, or even not seen as a 'proper language' at all. On the other hand, by the time that governments decide to recognise minority languages, recognition is often just symbolic. Those languages are dying or even dead, and everybody speaks or knows the majority language, so recognition is functionally superfluous – although symbolic recognition might still be valuable for revitalisation purposes.

If one language or variety is recognised and another is not, resentment and unrest can ensue. Implementing language policy can be a minefield. If planning is only top-down and a government decides to implement policy without consulting grass-roots communities, it can have the effect of creating apathy. People think 'The government will take care of teaching the language to our children in schools and we don't have to do it in the home'. This will be discussed below under 'prestige planning'

3.1.3 Language-in-education planning

Language-in-education planning (also known as acquisition planning) relates to how, when and where languages are learnt or taught (not the same thing). This is linked to corpus planning since a standard is often enforced through schools, which also need materials. As well as the medium of education, the choice of which languages are to be taught as foreign or second languages is also an issue. Often a so-called major world language is taught, when it may be more useful to teach the language and culture of a neighbouring community, especially if there are political rivalries.

Revitalisation of endangered languages is often an aim of language-in-education planning. It is common for this to be the first aim of activists when they think about language revitalisation: 'we've got to get our language taught in schools', largely because schools have often been instrumental in the decline of endangered languages. It is commonly assumed that young children learn languages most easily, and many programmes introduce endangered languages at primary level.[6] For the same reason, around the world governments are increasingly deciding they want children to learn foreign languages earlier and earlier. The problem of teacher availability is common to both these situations: both in terms of finding adults with language proficiency, and training them to teach young children. Quite different methods should be used in primary language teaching from those which are suitable for adults or teenagers. Inappropriate methods can lead to children being put off language learning, the opposite of what was intended. It may be more effective to introduce an endangered language at university level first, so that teachers can be trained (academic status can also raise a language's prestige). Textbooks and materials also need to be developed.

The issue of who decides the curriculum is a major concern when indigenous languages are taught. Hornberger (2008) discusses several examples where what is termed 'indigenous or bilingual education' has been implemented, but the curriculum is not under the control of the communities and does not necessarily include a cultural element.

In many contexts around the world, children are sent to a school where they do not understand the language used. Consultants on Guernsey have told me that because the teacher was not aware that they did not understand

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[6] Second language acquisition research has in fact found little advantage for primary language teaching, apart from accent acquisition: children learn most efficiently at age 11-12, so children who start learning languages as school subjects at this age usually catch up with primary learners (Singleton 1989, Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978, Scovel 2000).

anything, they were punished for not being obedient. In 1955 UNESCO stated that mother tongue education provides the best start for a child. A considerable body of research has demonstrated that the best results are achieved if all of the languages used in a child's multilingual repertoire are promoted, if children become literate in more than one language, *and* if each language has high prestige. If there is what is called *submersion*, when the home language is simply used as a transition to a dominant or majority language, then bilingual children are at a disadvantage. That is typically the situation in the UK and USA where children from many different language backgrounds are put into mainstream education; whereas if the child's home language and the language of wider communication are developed equally, then children achieve better results in all subjects, including the majority language. The fact that the majority of the world's population is multilingual demonstrates that it is not necessary to lose one language in order to learn another.

Unfortunately, linguists and educationalists have not been very successful in getting this message across. As noted by Kamwendo with regard to Malawi, '[o]ne dominant fear was that the mother tongue instruction policy would lower the standards of English and education in general … Also linked to the high demand for English is the hope of getting a job' (2005: 158). This was also the case in the Seychelles example described above. Often communities and parents feel that if there is education through the mother tongue the children will not learn English or the language of wider education that they need to get a job or to proceed to higher education. What they do not realise is that children would actually learn major languages better if they had a good grounding in literacy in their home language first.

However, it may be difficult to define 'mother tongue', 'first' or 'home' language. Many communities use a repertoire of several languages. As mentioned above, in the Seychelles everyone speaks Creole; there are also indigenous languages but the reason that Creole was chosen was that it is easier and cheaper to develop materials in one language. For this reason much of what is called 'mother-tongue' education in Africa is actually in a regional language of wider communication, not children's home languages. Practicality is an issue that governments will often raise with regard to language policy.

There are also instances where the home language is not necessarily best. For example, deaf children may not learn sign language in the home, but it is considered to be the best medium of education by most educationalists (see Schembri's chapter in this volume). It could also be argued that the common aim of language revitalisation activists to institute immersion education in endangered languages contradicts the mother-tongue education principle. I once put this point to Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, a prolific author on minority-

language education (e.g. 1995, 1999); she responded that immersion in an endangered language is justified when intergenerational transmission is lacking, and where exposure to majority language(s) is assured through their dominant place in the linguistic landscape.[7]

3.1.4 Prestige planning

Prestige planning refers to influencing or management of language attitudes. Interestingly, this term was first suggested by Haarmann in his 1984 paper which was written in German, but as the most influential discussion of language policy takes place in English, little notice was taken until he republished it in English in 1990.

Prestige planning consists of promoting a positive view of languages, challenging negative attitudes and ideologies of deficit. If the implementation of language planning measures is to be successful, as Haarmann (1990: 105) notes, 'not only the content of planning activities is important but also the acceptance or rejection of planning efforts'. Negative attitudes and ideologies are a key factor in language endangerment. Attitudes tend to be seen as personal opinions, whereas ideologies are defined as attitudes held by societies collectively. Attitudes can be attributed to ideologies, which in turn are seen as stemming from culture, education and tradition.

In the model of language management presented in Figure 1, I added the management of beliefs, which in my model equates to prestige planning. In many cases language activism includes attempts to change attitudes and therefore to change language behaviour, particularly when campaigning for revitalisation of an endangered language. But as we have seen, the management of beliefs is often omitted from language policy, even though it is vital for the success and acceptance of policies.

Another example of this is Irish (Fennell 1981). After independence in the 1920s, Irish was made the official language of the Irish Republic although it was already a minority language. The government forgot to bring the population on board when introducing compulsory Irish in schools, which led to a lack of enthusiasm and continued shrinkage of the speaker base.

Attitudes are also key in language maintenance at individual and family language policy level. Negative attitudes are internalised by individuals and

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[7] This is the case in the Spanish Basque country, where some schools provide two-thirds of the curriculum through Basque, a quarter through English, with just a couple of hours per week of Spanish literacy tuition.

speaker communities, who see small languages as 'holding us back', and languages of wider communication as 'more useful' to learn (both phrases I have heard from my Guernsey language consultants). 'Surely, this is a view to which they are entitled' according to Peter Ladefoged (1992) – who are linguists to try tell communities they should not abandon their heritage language in favour of a language of wider communication, and 'better themselves'?

However, attitudes can change. Many aspects of our lives are based on the premise that attitudes can change, e.g. advertising or electioneering. Language planning also relies on attitude change for success. The majority of endangered languages literature until the late 1990s focused on language decline, which gave a somewhat pessimistic view of endangered language prospects. As noted by Dorian (1993), such a limited view can obscure a longer-term dynamic by overlooking 'attitude shift'. Crystal (2000: 106) concurs that 'this kind of reaction [regret at not knowing the language] is common among the members of a community two generations after the one which failed to pass its language on'.

A slightly different framework for language policies is that of Ruíz (1984). The first 'orientation' he distinguished was 'language as a problem' – from both a social and an economic point of view. In this orientation, multilingualism can lead to lack of social cohesion and language as a symbol of ethnic identity can lead to conflict. This is still the view in many countries: e.g. in Pakistan, because of the political situation, promotion of minority languages is currently discouraged in favour of political/national unity. Multilingualism is also associated with poverty (see Harbert et al. 2009), so that speaking a minority language is viewed as a disadvantage. Teaching a multitude of languages in schools, including maintaining heritage languages, is seen as a logistical and financial problem rather than as an opportunity.

The second orientation identified by Ruíz is 'language as a right'. Why should we not have the right to speak our own language whenever we want, wherever we want, so that we can participate fully in social and political life? Many people are effectively disenfranchised because they do not know national/official languages. Catering for them would, of course, require interpreters and teachers, and literature in multiple languages, which in turn is perceived as a resourcing problem. Linked to the idea that linguistic differences can lead to conflict between different groups, in this orientation, if a particular group stresses language rights that may lead to conflicts with other groups or national authorities. So this too is seen as a problem-oriented way of looking at language.

The third orientation suggested by Ruíz is 'language as a resource', the most interesting for those of us who favour linguistic diversity. It views multilingualism as enhancing the skills of society as a whole: if full, additive

multilingual education is implemented, society will benefit from the increased cognitive skills of multilinguals. If languages are valued, then the groups that use them are also valued: minority language communities are then viewed as a source of expertise. If a language is promoted in its region, local economies and cultures are also promoted (although cultural tourism is not necessarily the way forward). If a person knows more than one language, it is easier to learn more languages. If people are encouraged to learn the languages of their neighbours, this can encourage inter-communal interaction and respect for other points of view, defusing inter-ethnic tensions. As noted by Haugen (1972), one of the major figures in language planning, 'language diversity is not a problem unless it is used as a basis for discrimination'.

4. Linguistic human rights and human development

'The first generation of independent African leaders neglected civil, political and language rights because they were perceived to be potentially subversive. Building strong nation-states against a background of ethnic and linguistic diversity was deemed more important' (Akinnaso 1994). This is one of the reasons why language planning acquired a bad reputation around 50 years ago. National language policy usually prioritised one language, often a former colonial language. So if a particular group wanted to speak their language they might be seen as subversive. However, it can be seen from places where there have been civil wars (Rwanda, for example) that monolingualism does not guarantee peace. An increasing number of studies recognise that granting minority rights is actually more likely to prevent conflict (e.g. Ashmore et al. 2001, Boran 2001). As noted in Ruíz' framework, knowledge of different languages does not mean that groups cannot communicate with and respect each other.

However, it is easy to say we would like everybody to be allowed and encouraged to use their own language, but it is not so easy to implement. It is much easier to say we support language rights than to implement them.

Language rights may be based on *tolerance* of people using different languages, or on *promotion.* A tolerance approach, where people are allowed to use their languages but are not provided with infrastructure support such as literacy materials or radio air time, does not help maintain minority languages.

Another means of categorising linguistic rights is by group or individual. It is easy to pay lip-service to individual rights, i.e. the right to use one's language in private, but group language rights are more effective, so that a community has a right to use its language in a school, for example. But the complications do not stop there: is the group defined geographically? Or numerically? (Grin 1995). In Morocco, for example, Berber is allowed in

schools in some areas of the country and not in other areas. What proportion of a local population needs to belong to a group in order to gain group rights? In Malaysia, a minority language may be taught if there are 15 pupils who speak it in a class, which in practice is difficult to achieve in any given class.

As noted above, *promoting* multilingualism may involve providing services in a multitude of languages, which is expensive. How much support is provided depends of course on resources and priorities. If someone from a minority group goes to a government office, is a translator provided for that person? Is there radio or TV in that language? Many governments feel that addressing such issues is too complicated, and ignore language issues. But not having a policy is actually a policy by default, and as Ruíz points out, may hide societal losses. The economist and language policy advisor Grin (2004) also notes that the assumed economic savings of a monolingual policy are by no means proven.

Human development is closely linked to language policy. When resources are scarce, basic needs such as clean water or health care may be prioritised over language rights. Poverty contributes to language shift: minority language speakers migrate to cities to try and find work. In those cities, sometimes speakers of a particular language cluster into communities which maintain their languages, but more often people shift to another language to get on in the city.

Development also contributes to language shift. Roads, bridges, schools will bring more contact with languages of wider communication. These may be associated with economic advancement while traditional languages are associated with the bad old times, which people want to get away from. So the dilemma for those of us who care about both people and endangered languages is, how can linguistic and cultural diversity be maintained while also helping people achieve a better standard of living?

Some linguists suggest that small languages can only really be preserved by a form of linguistic apartheid. However, development is not only about economics. Socio-cultural development involves developing the confidence and self-reliance of a community of individuals. If children are educated through a familiar language they are more likely to be self-confident individuals than if they are told that their own language and culture are inferior.

In response to this an 'ecological' or 'holistic' approach to language planning has been proposed (see Mühlhäusler 2000, Romaine 2002, 2009). Languages do not exist in a vacuum: languages are always in contact with other languages and also, of course, languages are used by people. The ecological view of language planning looks at linguistic ecologies in a wider sense, not simply in regard to other languages, but in regard to other factors in

the local community and wider world, all of which have an effect on linguistic and cultural diversity and whether particular languages are maintained or abandoned. In this viewpoint, in order to preserve a language it is necessary to preserve the group that speaks it: not just in a (p)reserve, but to help them develop both materially and culturally, without needing to abandon traditional territories, livelihoods and languages. A holistic or ecological approach works towards local, regional, national and international development, and aims to empower indigenous peoples and promote sustainable development. An increasing amount of rhetoric supports this view (e.g. Bastardas-Boada 2005, Bodomo 1996, Harbert et al. 2009, Romaine 2008, Trudell 2009) but it is unclear to what extent the recommendations are based on evidence, as there are few empirical studies. Nevertheless, this approach concurs with current thinking in development studies (Romaine 2009).

5. Gender and language policy

Intergenerational transmission in the family, seen as the key indicator of language maintenance (Fishman 1991), is usually carried out by mothers. Gender factors are therefore of key importance in language policy, since women's practices and attitudes are crucial for language maintenance. Yet they are rarely included in language policy discussions. In sociolinguistics women are generally seen to have more negative attitudes towards minority language varieties than men. Women are more likely to want to learn a majority language, are more likely to use more prestigious registers and to be concerned about correctness. This is not terribly good news if these are the people passing endangered languages on to the next generation.

Women's attitudes to minority languages have a direct relationship to the status of women in that society. Societies where women have a higher status tend to maintain their languages more than societies where women have low status. Languages of wider communication are often associated with more liberal attitudes towards women's status. Women, if they are aware of such issues, may associate a traditional language with their own lowly status in traditional society and therefore may want their children to learn a 'more useful' language in order to escape that situation. These issues also affect women's choices of partner: women may look for a husband from a language group that is likely to give them better economic standing (Gal 1978); in such families the minority heritage language is rarely maintained.

Gender issues are also relevant to migration and urbanisation. One such case study in Morocco is described by Hoffman (2003). Many local men have gone to the city to work and send money home, so it is the women who maintain traditional culture, language and society. So in that situation the maintenance of the language relies on the seclusion of the women, who have

little contact with people from outside and who consequently have fairly negative attitudes towards their situation: they see migrating to the city as associated with freedom, with things that men are able to do and women are not able to do, while they are stuck in the village without any resources. It is therefore necessary to consider the holistic context: the status of women, their aspirations for themselves and their children, their view of traditional ways of life, and the ideology implied by the abandonment of that way of life by men.

6. Conclusion: Linguists and language policy

If nothing is done to support endangered languages, of course they will continue to disappear. As Wright (2004: 187) stated, '*Laissez-faire* policies mean that the languages of power and prestige will eventually take over in all situations of contact.' Because language contact situations are often not equal, languages are in dominant and subordinate positions. It is easy for linguists to get caught up in language policy, although we may prefer to avoid political issues, simply record a language, write a sketch grammar and go away again. But it is difficult to remain objective if we have lived and worked with a community, often for several years. We become close to people in that community and we care what happens to them and their language.

Here I discuss an example of almost accidental involvement in language policy which happened to Paul Kerswill of Lancaster University.[8] In early 2007 Paul examined a PhD in Sweden (one of his specialisms is Scandinavian dialects). About six months later, in September 2008, he was invited to go to Chile as a guest lecturer. Coincidentally, the father of the PhD candidate in Sweden worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Chile, and he invited Paul to visit. The UNDP's aims in Chile were first of all to develop English language teacher education, but also to smooth relations between the Chilean government and an indigenous group in the south, the Mapuche. Paul soon found that his advice as a linguist was being sought on both issues, although neither ELT nor language policy are his main areas of expertise.[9] He wrote to me: 'despite my protestations that I'm not really the right person he wanted to go ahead with a high level meeting involving

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[8] Paul Kerswill is a prominent sociolinguist who conducts research into language variation and change. His most recent major project is Multicultural London English: see http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/faculty/activities/539/ (accessed 2009-12-12).

[9] Paul wrote: 'What the UNDP is doing sounds really interesting: he has already set in train meetings with the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish ambassadors to discuss Sami political and language policy, and will be doing the same with other South American countries and New Zealand.'

government representatives and me as advisor on ELT issues and, it transpires, language policy issues - help! What do I do?' What he did was to get in touch with colleagues with relevant expertise, and with an ethnographer from the University of Concepcion who had useful contacts within the Mapuche community.

This illustrates the importance of having background knowledge of political situations surrounding language. A quick Internet search will find numerous interesting links regarding the Mapuche. Firstly, they have had a considerable amount of conflict with the Chilean authorities and police. They have resisted the appropriation of their lands ever since the original Spanish colonisation of Chile, so there have been numerous land disputes. They complain about human rights abuses, both physical and legal. There are concerns about bio-piracy: companies taking genetic information about indigenous plants (often gleaned from traditional knowledge) and patenting it. It is not just the Mapuche themselves who complain: the United Nations has criticised Chile's use of counter-terrorism laws to detain Mapuche leaders.

The Mapuches' language, Mapudungun, has approximately 300,000 speakers according to *Ethnologue*, of whom 200,000 are in Chile. This may not sound highly endangered, but in comparison Welsh, which is considered endangered in the UK, has nearly twice as many. Language shift is in evidence: community leaders reported to Paul that most Mapuche now usually speak Spanish. But they would like to maintain Mapudungun, and if possible set up a private Mapudungun-medium school along the lines of German-medium schools in Chile.

The Mapuche are strongly against top-down language planning, preferring to manage their own language policy for themselves. The Microsoft software company has a Local Language Program, to 'provide underserved communities with an entry point to technology in a way that honors their language and cultural distinctions' (Gates 2008). Such interfaces (e.g. spelling checkers and translation dictionaries) are desired by many minority communities who wish to expand the use of their languages into modern domains. The Mapuche are in favour of this in principle, but objected because Microsoft developed the software without consulting them. In a letter to Bill Gates, head of Microsoft, dated 12 August 2005, Mapuche representatives wrote:

> The fact that non Mapuche organisms such as the Chilean State, through the Ministry of Education, the National Corporation on Indigenous Development (CONADI) and the University of the Frontier granted themselves the right to manage and develop our ancestral language constitutes a violation of our human rights on our cultural and collective heritage. As stated by the United Nations

> Special Rapporteur in her final report on the protection of the
> heritage of indigenous peoples (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1995/26):
>
> "To protect their heritage, indigenous peoples must control their
> own means of cultural transmission and education. This includes
> their right to the continued use and, wherever necessary, the
> restoration of their own languages and orthographies."[10]

North American native communities are also increasingly concerned about the
ownership of language, and in some cases linguists have been asked to leave.
Language policy issues are thus linked to intellectual property issues, which
all researchers need to address (see Austin's chapter on ethics in this volume).

In November 2006, having received no satisfactory response, the Mapuche
threatened to sue Microsoft, which was reported widely in the media around
the world. Media discourse concerning the Mapuche is interesting: e.g. the
Reuters report of the Microsoft affair included a note that the Mapuche 'are
renowned for their ferocity'.[11] Prior to Paul's visit, two cultural leaders
(whom Paul met) were filmed performing a traditional ritual, which was
shown on Chilean TV to illustrate a news item reporting on a terrorist attack
in a different part of the country – the implication being that simply to be a
Mapuche is to be linked with terrorists. So there is considerable bitterness and
resentment in the community.

A request to a foreign linguist to intervene in language policy thus needs
to be seen in its broader context. On the surface the Chilean government's
policies of developing indigenous languages might seem benign. But once
again they were approaching an external 'expert' and trying to formulate
language policy without consulting the community. This brings us back to the
question of 'who is language policy for?' The Mapuche see these efforts as
serving to disenfranchise them further, which means that the policies are not
very effective.

It is thus essential to take local culture and politics into account when
looking at language policy. Paul eventually met with respected cultural figures
who had the right to speak for the community, whereas the government was
only talking to external agencies and academics. Having understood the

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[10] http://www.mapuche.info/mapu/ctt050812.html (2009-12-12).

[11] http://www.williams.edu/go/native/mapuchelang.htm. This issue stimulated
interesting comments on blogs, e.g. http://www.engadget.com/2006/11/25/chilean-
mapuche-indians-suing-microsoft/ (both accessed 2009-12-12). Some of the blog
entries are scathing about extending intellectual property rights to language, but the
Mapuches' concerns can be better understood in the context of wider concerns about
piracy of indigenous knowledge such as traditional remedies from local flora.

background, quite a constructive discussion ensued. Unfortunately, the language situation has not been resolved because of the underlying human rights issues.

It is important for official language policy not to become another means of domination, or to be perceived as side-stepping other issues. Chile is not the only place where language policy may be seen by governments as a 'cheap and easy' solution to conflict: the Thai government is also promoting local languages in an effort to smooth relations with minorities, but avoiding addressing land rights issues (Bernard Spolsky, personal communication). Communities may prefer more concrete support. As suggested above, the most effective policies take into account political and economic factors, as well as community concerns.

In recent years there has been increased interest in the 'empowerment' approach to language documentation (Grinevald 2003, Yamada 2007). A logical extension of this is what is called 'bottom-up' or 'grass-roots' language planning, which also relates to the ecological approach to language planning discussed above. A holistic, empowerment approach can include local societies, language activists, pressure groups and individuals from the community. As noted in the section on prestige planning, policies are more likely to have an effect if they take into account community concerns and attitudes of the community itself; this is also true of language documentation projects.

The very fact that we work with a community, looking at a language, indicates that there is interest in that language from outside, from someone from an important university. We will be seen as people whose views carry weight, even though we may not wish to bear that weight. As Heller (2004: 286) notes, 'we have ... entered a discursive space as active participants, a role which carries both rights and obligations'. If we remain neutral and do not express support for an endangered language, then we are condoning language loss.

As linguists we are likely to be in touch with people who care about their language. We may have more effect on language policy at grass-roots level because that is the level that we are working at. As we have external contacts and knowledge of other contexts, we can form a bridge between communities. It is not uncommon for communities not even to know that there are other endangered languages and that so many other communities around the world are going through the same problems. They may feel isolated, and powerless to halt language shift. We have access to libraries and literature, and know what people are doing in other places; we can make suggestions, and inform them about language revitalisation efforts that have worked elsewhere, and some that have not – and that success may depend on context. We may be called on to advise on language policy, or to mediate between local groups

and government authorities. For all these reasons, it is essential for linguists to gain an awareness of issues involved in language policy-making, in order to be prepared.

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Discussion Questions

1. Think about your own experiences of language policy and management. What kinds of things do you include? e.g.

- Language use in the family?
- Which languages were used/taught at your school?
- Which languages are used for different subjects at your university?
- What are the officially recognised languages in your country/region?
- Are the policy (or practical) decisions in each of these circumstances conscious or implicit?

2. Have you ever been asked for advice on language policy? If so, what did you say?

3. What are the attitudes towards minority languages in your country/region? (How) could they be altered?

4. How could national language policies be developed so as to preserve linguistic diversity?