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LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY

Language Planning and Policy Language Planning in Local Contexts

Edited by

Anthony J. Liddicoat and Richard B. Baldauf Jr.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Language Planning and Policy: Language Planning in Local Context / Edited by Anthony J. Liddicoat and Richard B. Baldauf, Jr.

Language Planning and Policy

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Language planning. I. Liddicoat, Anthony. II. Baldauf, Richard B. P40.5.L35L285 2008 2007050422

306.44'9-dc22

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-1-84769-063-0 (hbk)

Multilingual Matters Ltd

UK: Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall, Victoria Road, Clevedon BS21 7HH. USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.

Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

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The articles in this book also appeared in the journal of *Current Issues in Language Planning* Vol. 1: 3, 2000; Vol. 3: 1, 2002; Vol. 5: 2, 2004; Vol. 5: 2, 2004; Vol. 6: 1, 2005; Vol. 7: 1, 2006; Vol. 7: 2&3, 2006.

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Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd.

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Introduction

Language Planning in Local Contexts: Agents, Contexts and Interactions

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Local Contexts in Language Planning Research

Traditionally language planning research has focused on the actions of governments and similar macro-level institutions. Language planning as an academic discipline began in the context of nation-state formation following the end of colonialism (see for example Ferguson, 1962; Fishman, Ferguson, & Das Gupta, 1968; Pool, 1972; Rubin & Jernudd, 1971). The chief concerns were related to issues of creating national unity and developing and maintaining effective communication within emerging nations (Mansour, 1993; Ricento, 2003). Such a focus privileges the consideration of national level actions and the intervention of official bodies in the language questions facing a society. In this context and in that era, local issues of language planning were seen as secondary to the overall process of planning, or to ones that raised unwanted problems and competition for the national language. Initially, such issues often have been ignored (e.g., local language development in Indonesia – Nababan, 1991), or suppressed (Tai'yü, Hakka and aboriginal languages in Taiwan – Sandel, 2003; Tsao, 1998) if considered at all.

One of the reasons for the marginalisation of micro-level language planning within the context of language planning research has been definitional. Most definitions of language planning presuppose 'deliberate planning by an organized body enjoying either legal or moral authority, such as a government agency, commission, or academy' (Nahir, 1998: 351). Such legal or moral authority has regularly been located within macro-level institutions created and/or sanctioned by nation-states. This view of language planning locates research within a theory of power which sees the top-down exercise of power (or domination) as the relevant construct for understanding decision-making about languages. Such a view of power in language planning is however problematic as a delimiting agent for constituting the focus of language planning research. It is problematic for a number of reasons.

The first is that deliberate planning of language issues implies a direct causational relationship between decisions made by those with the power to execute them and the actual results of language planning – leaving aside a role for acceptance of the language plan itself. Such a causational link is not justified by language planning outcomes, which may be *unplanned* or may result from activ-

ities which were not planned (Baldauf, 1994; Eggington, 2002). Such research shows that a restriction that limits analysis to deliberate planning is not helpful in understanding the realities of language planning. In fact, it is often local contextual agents which affect how macro-level plans function and the outcomes that they achieve. As Baldauf notes, the need for an understanding of the unplanned dimensions of language planning outcomes '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' (Baldauf, 1994: 86).

The second reason is that it oversimplifies the nature of power as it applies in speech communities and how this power is realised in matters of language. All social groups involve technologies of power through which the actions of social agents are shaped. If power is understood as l'action sur les actions (Foucault, 1975), the operations and role of power become more complex as power lies not simply in the ability to dominate but also in the ability to shape the behaviour of others. The operation of power is not therefore simply enforcement of particular norms but consists in ways of getting others to act of their own volition in particular ways. This means that individuals and groups have the potential to exercise power over other members of their society in ways which affect the behaviours of others. Thus, it is not through the coercive and normative power of institutions - the power ascribed by status or realised through sanctions (Carspecken, 1996) – that behaviours are changed but through more subtle operations on the choices of others. Among these are the strategies that Carspecken (1996) identifies as *charm* – the ability to use culturally understood identity claims and norms to gain the trust and loyalty of others – and contractual *power* – an agreement specifying reciprocal obligations between parties. Within a more elaborated view of power, an exclusive focus on macro-level phenomena becomes problematic for a full understanding of the nature of language-related processes.

This analysis suggests that language planning work in local contexts is a fundamental and integrated part of the overall language planning process, which merits attention both within the context of the operation of macro-level planning – as a necessary extension of it – and in its own right – as a local activity with no macro roots.

The focus on local contexts in language planning mirrors an increased concern for the democratisation of decision-making in social policy in general which recognises the impact of power asymmetries on policy outcomes (Hill, 2003). Concern for democratisation has been prompted by a realisation that existing national-level power structures have undergone an erosion of legitimacy in many contexts which cannot be remedied by centralisation of decision-making, and in which there need to evolve local processes to address local contexts (Ghani, Lockhart & Carnahan, 2006). A focus on local contexts is not only warranted by the democratisation of decision-making, but also from the perspective of devolution, especially in education where the locus of much of the decision-making lies with local communities (Tunstall, 2001).

However, it needs to be noted that the shift in the locus of power from the macro to the micro – to the local level – may alter only some of the power relationships, but may maintain others (Jocelyn Graf, 2007, personal communication).

For example, regionalisation may shift power from centralised structures (e.g., the Ministry of Education in Jakarta) to more regional structures as has occurred as part of 'Reformasi' in Indonesia since the fall of Suharto. This had led to local government elections and in 2006 in education to the initiation of 'localised curriculum' that gradually is putting more power and decision making about language and curriculum in the hands of local administrators, schools, lecturers and teachers. However, consultation may not be being extended to students. Thus, although power relationships may now be more immediate, and hopefully more attuned to students' needs, it also may be the case that from a student perspective local language planning and democratisation may have had little impact on their ability to influence change.

Agents of Language Planning at the Local Level

Haarmann (1990) was perhaps the first to suggest, in the context of promotional activities for prestige planning, that there are different levels of agency in language planning - government, agencies, pressure groups and individuals – ranging from the macro to the micro. Rather than focusing on the work of governments and their agencies as the agents in language planning, a microlevel approach needs to consider a range of agents, which exist with greater or lesser formality within their local speech communities. For the latter three micro groupings of agents in Haarman's categorisation, the range is quite diverse as language issues can arise in association with many different types of activities and in different domains. Thus, any survey of the agents of micro language planning must necessarily be incomplete because of the diversity of potential groups who need to engage in language: e.g. a local committee deciding to use sign language interpreters, interest groups disseminating their material in multiple languages, or workplaces with multilingual populations. Spolsky (2004) also has examined this issue indirectly by briefly outlining a number of domains or sociolinguistic contexts ranging from the micro (i.e. families, schools, religious organisations, the workplace, local government) to the macro (i.e. supra-national groupings, and polities) where language planning occurs. However, we would argue that power and its use ultimately are constituted by agents who exist in particular domains. Therefore, in this overview there is an attempt to outline some of the better documented agents, roughly along the lines of the three agentive groups suggested by Haarmann (1990), without a priori excluding any potential others.

At the most micro-level of language planning is located the work of individuals, or often small groups of individuals, who work to revive or promote the use of a language. The influence of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda on the revival of Hebrew is widely known, although his individual role may be contested (Fellman, 1973; Nahir, 1998). His influence in actively using Hebrew as an everyday language and raising his son as a first-language speaker of Hebrew, together with the development of new lexical items as required, are frequently cited as initial steps in the revival of Hebrew. The work of linguist Rob Amery, in collaboration with the indigenous community, in the corpus planning for the revival of the Kaurna language in Australia has also been well documented (Amery, 2000, 2001). Sabino Arana (1865–1903), who created many of the cultural symbols