

Language Planning

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Abstract: *Language planning, and language policy likewise, is one of the two principal aspects of macro sociolinguistics, which functions as a study of language management. Since language only belongs to human-beings, we not only have a good command of it but also positively impact on it in a manner that best serve our communication purposes. Characterized by three basics of language status planning, language corpus planning and language prestige planning, how language planning is conducted in different communities of speech depends on a variety of factors, among which emerge language situations, language attitudes, and relationships between language planning and language policy.*

Keywords: Language Planning, Language Policy, Sociolinguistics, Language Situation, Language Attitudes

1. Introduction

Spoken language only belongs to human beings. It is not only used as means of communication and thinking but also positively affected so that it becomes more and more perfect, develops, and performs well its basic functions. Therefore, although it was born later than other linguistic disciplines, sociolinguistics promptly focused on two aspects of linguistic science associated with society, namely, “language policy” and “language planning”.

Language planning, most generally, is the work of language management, which can be seen as an active, organized, and planned regulatory response to language activity and a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of language or language varieties within a speech community (Kaplan, Baldauf and

Richard, 1997). For example, it prepares a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community (Cooper, 1989: 30). Therefore, language planning is also known as language management or language engineering.

2. Features and content of language planning

2.1. Features of language planning

Language planning is commonly characterized by its sociability, power, and purposefulness.

Sociability is expressed first of all in the coverage of the whole society, that is, everyone in society can participate in language planning by speaking or writing. A dictionary as a search engine of a language is a concrete expression of language planning. The media have a

particularly large role to play in language planning. From newspaper spelling checks to personal letter writing, even when talking between people, etc., can all contribute to language planning. However, when it comes to individuals concerning language planning, sociolinguistics places particular emphasis on the role of social activists, now often referred to as “public figures”, “celebrities”, specifically, famous intellectuals, writers and artists, cultural, social, political activists, etc. whose images, inclusive of their speech, impact and inspire, even to some extent, guide the use of language in the speech community. *Power* is the expression of the state’s viewpoints on linguistic issues. The most feasible and effective decisions for language planning are made by the state (the government) or an agency authorized by the state. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the work of language planning belongs first of all to the work of the state. Without power, language planning can even lead to chaos in language use. When the state or heads of state participate in language planning, the power of language planning is strongly demonstrated. In Vietnam, for example, when the late Prime Minister Pham Van Dong raised the issue of “preserving the purity of the Vietnamese language” in 1966, it has become a pervasive and sustained movement until now. Major language policies are decided by the state. When deciding on the specific content of language planning, the state always considers it carefully, taking into account how that work will affect the interests of the nation as a whole, as well as that of ethnic groups in particular. The reason is that power is always double-sided, that is, without power in language planning, language planning is difficult to do; on the contrary, if too much power is imposed, it

will be counter-productive, even leading to the “death of language” (Crystal D., 2000). The excessive focus on the status and function of the national language will make ethnic minority languages, especially those of ethnic minorities with a small population, gradually disappear and be at risk of extinction. Therefore, it is necessary to be careful in using power in language planning to ensure the stability and objectivity of language development, which is reflected in the cross-cutting policy of the Party and the State of Vietnam on “protecting and developing Vietnamese”, “preserving and promoting ethnic minority languages”. The Constitution of Vietnam stipulates: “The national language is Vietnamese. Ethnic groups have the right to use their language and script, preserve their national identity, and promote their fine customs, practices, traditions and culture” (Clause 3, Article 5, Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2013).

Purposefulness is defined by the social-communicative function of language. Language planning, on the one hand, aims to solve problems arising in language communication; on the other hand, fosters the ability to promote the social function of language. Therefore, it is required to pay attention to the reality of language use, rights, language attitudes of users, and related socio-political factors to achieve purposefulness when making language planning.

Since language planning is social, authoritative, and purposeful work, it is closely tied to the social context where language planning takes place. The success or failure of this work depends a lot on social factors, socio-political issues, awareness, etc., that is, habits in using language. “In any literate community with more or less tradition,

there is both a belief and rationalization of speaking and writing that the planner may end up finding himself powerless to resist" (Haugen E., 1966: 84). Familiar expressions are formed in Vietnamese such as: "*xay bột trẻ em*" ("milling flour for children" is misspelled as grinding children), "*cây cổ thụ*" (old tree)", "*núi Thái Sơn*", "*sông K'ông Pút*" (in which the words *cây* and *thụ*; *núi* and *Sơn*, *sông* and *K'ông* are synonyms, respectively), "*thập tử nhất sinh*" (ten parts dead, one part alive) instead of "*cửu tử nhất sinh*" (nine parts dead, one part alive) to describe the life-threatening situation. Therefore, although the content of language planning work can sometimes be correct, it has to go through stages, even very roundabout, to be successful. That is to say, the purposefulness of language planning is always associated with durability over time, "haste does not bring success", and even much less rigidly imposed work but rather must consider these seemingly unusual but very normal linguistic phenomena from the approach of language - culture - society relationship.

2.2. Content of language planning

The interpretation as given above shows that language planning has broad content. Depending on the reality of the linguistic situation that each community at each specific stage, selects appropriate and effective planning content (Haugen, 1966; Stewart, 1968; Nahir, 2003; Wardhaugh, 2002; Kloss, 1969; 姚 亚平, 2006;...). The details of language planning are presented in this part.

W. Stewart (1968) suggested that there are 10 functional areas in language planning, including the functions of 1) official language; 2) provincial language (e.g. French in Quebec, Canada); 3) language of wider communication (e.g. Hindi in India,

Swahili in East Africa); 4) international language (e.g. French in the past and English today); 5) capital language (e.g. Dutch and French in Brussels); 6) group language (e.g. Hebrew among Jews); 7) educational language (e.g. Urdu in West Pakistan and Bengali in East Pakistan); 8) school subject language, e.g. Latin and Ancient Greek in English schools); 9) literary language (e.g. ancient Greek); 10) religious language (e.g. Latin for the Latin rite in the Roman Catholic church, Arabic for the Koran/Qur'an).

M. Nahir (2003) proposed 11 goals that are also the content of language planning, including: 1) language purification; 2) language revival (e.g. for rarely used languages); 3) language reform; 4) language standardization; 5) language spread; 6) lexical modernization; 7) terminology unification; 8) stylistic simplification; 9) interlingual communication (e.g. in multilingual communities); 10) language maintenance (e.g. to protect mother tongue, first language); 11) auxiliary-code standardization; e.g. for the deaf, rules for transliteration, transcription, etc.

From such a series of specific issues, language planning is based on a group of problems to summarize some of the main contents, of which emerges language status planning, language corpus planning, and language prestige planning.

Firstly, language status planning is understood as changing the social function of a language (or language variant), which is related to the rights and obligations of the users of that language. For example, any language or dialect in a multilingual and/or multi-dialectic country is recognized as an official language by the state, the national status of that language is automatically enhanced; thereby, people who use that

language will enjoy many advantages. On the contrary, any language that is deprived of its communication function due to being suppressed or overwhelmed, the status of that language can be considered as being gradually lost. Accordingly, those who use this language have limited linguistic advantages associated with their interests, even at the risk of language switching.

Due to the importance of work related to the life of each language as well as the interests of members of society, language status planning is a matter within the scope of the government's direct management or authorized agencies.

Linguistic status can be determined from different sources (summarized from Haugen, 1966; Stewart, 1968; Nahir, 2003; Wardhaugh, 2002; Kloss, 1969; 姚亚平, 2006;...) as follows.

- Determining language status based on its origin, there are 5 broad categories, including: 1) Native language; 2) Standard/normative language; 3) Ancient language; 4) Pidgin/pidgin; 5) Creole (a higher, more complete form of creole). Another way of identifying based on linguistic origin includes: 1) Endoglossic language (the language of the country itself, spoken by the majority of the people); 2) exoglossic language (the language imported from outside but spoken in that country, for example, English in South Africa); 3) Coexistence of endoglossic and exoglossic languages (for example, Swahili and English in Kenya).

- Determining language status based on linguistic structure, there includes: 1) Standard language proficiency (modernized, meeting communication needs and used for teaching at university level); 2) Standard language proficiency but limited use; 3) Old standard language (developed rapidly

in the pre-industrial era, but so far failed to meet the needs of science - technology); 4) Young standard language (recently codified by grammar books, dictionaries, just adapted to high school education, not yet able to satisfy university education); 5) The language has not been perfected in terms of written literature; 6) The language has no written cultural tradition.

- Determining language status based on the social function of language, there are 7 categories, namely: 1) Languages used only for communication within a certain social circle; 2) Languages used only in case of official communication; 3) The language appears because it is itself a standard (universal) language or a language used for mass communication; 4) Languages used in education from primary school upwards; 5) Languages used in religion; 6) Languages used in international exchanges, between countries; 7) Language as a subject in school.

- Based on the linguistic situation, the language status can be determined as follows: 1) Primary languages (satisfying three conditions that the number of users must exceed 25% of the total population; being a native language; being a national common language, that is, at least 50% of high school students has a good command of that language); 2) Secondary languages (the number of users does not exceed 25%, used in primary education); 3) Specialized languages (for example, languages used in religion such as Balinese of Islam; language used in artistic creation such as Old Chinese in Taiwan).

- From a legal perspective, the language status in a country can be determined as follows: 1) National languages (defined by the law of the state, used in domestic administration, education, state media, and

in foreign affairs; and likewise the national flag and anthem, the national language is a national symbol and property, which symbolizes the unity and independence of a country); 2) Official languages (defined by the law of the state, used in all activities of the state, helping members of the country to communicate, study, find a job, work, etc.); the national language can also be the official language, but not necessarily vice versa); 3) Ethnic languages (as the mother tongue of members of a nation, a tool of communication within the nation; an important component of ethnic consciousness, and one of the important factors contributing to the formation of the nation, and at the same time being a means for national unification; the ethnic language exists in the form of dialects, in oral literature); 4) Regional languages (the language of one of the ethnic minorities is used as a common communication tool among the ethnic groups in that region, followed by the national language and the official language; the language selected as regional language is usually those of ethnic minorities with a larger population, more concentrated than other ethnic minorities in that area).

Secondly, language corpus planning aims to solve the intrinsic relationship in the language, specifically to standardize and develop the language itself. Language corpus planning covers several aspects such as language standardization, complete writing (reform of the spelling system, improvement of writing, new writing processing, etc.), language modernization or intellectualization, etc.

Language standardization has always been a hot topic of language corpus planning. If standard “is what is chosen as a basis for comparison, to make it right” (Hoang Phe,

2001), then language standardization is defining a standard for a certain language with conditions that need to be satisfied including the results of the evaluation and selection of the speech community; accepted by society at a certain stage; being the linguistic-socio-historical category, which exists objectively; being the characteristic of language - culture with temporary and relative stability. Language standardization includes standardization within a language (such as in the system structure in terms of phonetic, grammatical, and lexical aspects), at the communication scope of the language, standardization to determine standard language. There are three main standardization trends today: 1) Normative-based normalization provides a standard framework to evaluate “standard” or “non-standard”, “true” or “false”. It has the advantage of following clear criteria, but its biggest limitation is not seeing the movement and development of language as a social phenomenon and reflection; 2) Descriptive-based normalization means that it is based on the fact that the language is used for normalization. It has the advantage of paying attention to the movement of language associated with society, but there are no criteria, even following the way of ‘aping’; 3) Normalization is based on the choice of sociolinguistics (one of many options), i.e. a combination of normative rules (systemic standards) with pragmatic rules (usage standards), between absolute and relative, between normative and custom, between permanent and temporary, etc. Due to such different ways of standardization, standardization in languages in general, and in Vietnamese in particular, has always been a topic of great interest, even in fierce debates without or no conclusion.

Thirdly, language prestige planning aims to influence society's perception of language to have a positive attitude and impact on language. In other words, if language prestige planning has goals outside the language, language corpus planning has goals within language, then language prestige planning has evaluation goals for the above two types of planning (status and corpus). The practice of language planning shows that there are many cases where the efforts of language status planning and language corpus planning have failed to achieve their goals or even failed simply because of the lack of language prestige planning. For example, trying to raise the status of certain languages or language variants that are "unreputable" often leads to failure.

In sociolinguistics, language prestige is understood as the degree of respect and social value of community members towards a language or language variants (dialects or features of a language variant). Social prestige and language prestige are, in common sense, related. The language of elite groups, for example, often has language prestige; people who use prestige languages and their variations are also social prestige people. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that social prestige and language prestige are an integral part of power because language itself is incapable or rather unable to determine its value, but power alone will determine the value of that language and contribute to its standardization.

To assess and lead to a positive view to help the language strengthen and promote its roles and functions, language prestige planning focuses on overt prestige and covert prestige. For overt prestige, the social value lies within a unified, universally accepted set of social norms; while for

covert prestige, positive social meaning lies in the local culture of social relations. Thus, it is possible that a linguistic variant is "despised" in one context but has covert prestige in another (Hudson, 1999). Such variations of Vietnamese language on Facebook as *rùi, ròai, iu, vãi, vãi chưởng, đấng lòng, để đây không nói gì*, etc. are not appreciated, even raising concern about the negative responses towards the purity of Vietnamese, but they are the "linguistic highlights" of the social networking community.

Therefore, language prestige planning aims to influence the way language is perceived by both users and non-users and the respect for a language or its variant. Take Africa for example. Language prestige planning therein aims to promote the positive values of the languages, that is, creating demand for these languages in Africa's multilingual market; motivating or encouraging the African languages as a means of teaching in schools; using African languages to access resources and jobs.

3. Conclusion

Considering language planning as a social device, the question is how to use it to determine language (language choice or language variants) and language/language variants development that best serve social goals.

One of the aspects being discussed is the relationship between language planning and language policy: Are they two or one? The answer depends on the perspective of each country. The Soviet Union, for example, emphasized ethnic minorities, inclusive of ethnic minority languages, and considered language policy a part of ethnic policy, language planning as "the policy implementation". In contrast, the US only focuses on language planning.

Since language planning belongs not only to language itself but also to political decision-making, it is associated with linguistic-political issues (i.e., social classes use language for their political purposes; social stratification in language use; language conflicts caused by ethnic and national conflicts, etc.) □

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