1 Towards a theory of language management

Language policy is all about choices. If you are bilingual or plurilingual, you have to choose which language to use. Even if you speak only one language, you have choices of dialects and styles. To understand the nature of this process, one needs an ecological model (Haugen 1987: 27) that will correlate social structures and situations with linguistic repertoires. Any speaker or writer is continually selecting features – sounds or spellings, lexical items, or grammatical patterns – which are significant markers of languages, dialects, styles, or other varieties of language, and which, bundled together, constitute recognized and labeled languages, like Navajo or English or Chinese, or more precisely, varieties of language like American English, or Midwestern English, or Cockney, or Indian English (Blommaert 2007), or what Blommaert (2008) refers to as "speech resources." One fundamental fact about named varieties is that they are socially or politically rather than linguistically determined. A dialect becomes a language when it is recognized as such: recently, the prime ministers of Romania and Moldova are reported to have argued (the former speaking in French and the latter in Russian) at an international congress over whether their two varieties were one language or two. The various Scandinavian languages are close enough for speakers of Norwegian to understand someone speaking Danish or Swedish (Delsing 2007; Doetjes 2007) but they consider them separate languages; the speakers of Chinese varieties cannot understand each other, but they all agree they speak Chinese. The differences between two varieties are critical, and because they are highly patterned, a listener notices them and tries to interpret them.

The goal of a theory of language policy is to account for the choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns recognized by the speech community (or communities) of which they are members. Some of these choices are the result of *management*, reflecting conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control the choices. My focus in this book is on this group, and my goal is to outline a theory that accounts for it.

The slow progress in the development of a theory of language management brings to light the difficulties faced by all social sciences in their endeavors to

produce a satisfactory framework accounting for human behavior. In a recent essay Watts (2007: 489) explains:

> Social phenomena involve the interactions of large (but still finite) numbers of heterogeneous entities, the behaviors of which unfold over time and manifest themselves on multiple scales. It is hard to understand, for example, why even a single organization behaves the way it does without considering (a) the individuals who work in it; (b) the other organizations with which it competes, cooperates and compares itself to; (c) the institutional and regulatory structures within which it operates; and (d) the interactions between all these components.

Watts suggests that the best way to capture this complexity is by using network analysis, but he recognizes the great difficulty in analyzing social networks which are not static, not unitary, and exist in a larger framework. Such analysis is currently beyond the state of the art in language policy too, but Watts' explanation does hint at the principal components that need to be taken into account: individuals, organizations, institutional and regulatory structures, and interaction. All of these will also be key elements in a theory of language policy and management. In this introductory chapter, I want to sketch a preliminary theoretical model. In the chapters that follow, I will apply this model to specific cases and data, which will lead in the course of the book to its modification and fine tuning.

The theory starts with a number of assumptions, which must themselves be open to testing and adaptation in the course of the exploration. The first assumption is that while language policy is intended to account for individual choices, it is, like other aspects of language, as Saussure (1931) pointed out, a social phenomenon, depending on the beliefs and consensual behaviors of members of a speech community.

What is a speech community? From its beginnings, sociolinguistics has avoided a precise answer to this fundamental question. Sociolinguists distinguished between a *language community* – all those who speak a specific variety of language – and a *speech community* – those who share a communication network, agreeing more or less on the appropriateness of the use of the multiple varieties used in that community. A language community as Hockett (1958) for instance used the term might be the English-speaking world, the complexity of which we realize since Kachru (1986) identified the many varieties which constitute World English, or the Francophone world (although *francophonie* is more a political than a linguistic concept), or at the other extreme, the last remaining speakers of a dying language. A speech community, on the other hand, may be a family, or a group of people who regularly use the same coffee shop, or an office, or a village, or a city, as Labov (1966) showed, or a region or a nation (Gumperz 1968).

Given this fuzziness, although I will regularly talk about speech communities, we need a more defined organizational unit. I will use the notion of

domain, as introduced to sociolinguistics by Fishman (1972) in his classic study of the New Jersey barrio. Although he said that domains must be empirically defined for any specific community, Fishman laid down useful generalizations that I will adapt. First, a domain is named for a social space, such as home or family, school, neighborhood, church (or synagogue or mosque or other religious institution), workplace, public media, or governmental level (city, state, nation). In building a theory of language management, I will argue that each of these domains has its own policy, with some features managed internally and others under the influence of forces external to the domain. Language management in the family is partly under the control of family members, but its goals are regularly influenced by the outside community.

As defined by Fishman, a domain is distinguished by three characteristics: participants, location, and topic. The *participants* in a domain are characterized not as individuals but by their social roles and relationships. In the family domain, participants are labeled with kinship terms, like father, mother, brother, sister, aunt or uncle, grandfather or grandmother, or other appropriate roles such as maid or babysitter. In the school domain, the typical roles are teachers, pupils or students, or principals. In the workplace, they are bosses, employers, workers, employees, foremen, clients, and customers. In the government domain, they are legislators, bureaucrats, and citizens. Any individual of course may fill different roles in different domains, with conflicts sometimes obvious – how do I speak to my son at work if he is also my employer?

Secondly, a domain has a typical location – usually its name. Domains connect social and physical reality – people and places. Discomfort at the lack of congruity between participant and location – introducing my professor to my parents at home – signals the existence of norms. The physical aspects of the location are often relevant (a house only has space for a limited number of people, the countryside has fewer obvious places for signs than the city, the layout of a factory influences communication rules), but it is the social meaning and interpretation of the location that is most pertinent to language choice.

Fishman's third component is selection of topic – what it is appropriate to talk about in the domain. Gumperz (1976) has an illustration, showing how an employer and employee switch languages when they turn from business to social matters. In my model, this third component will be widened to include communicative function – what is the reason for speaking or writing.

Essentially I will be arguing that the regular language choices made by an individual are determined by his or her understanding of what is appropriate to the domain. Kymlicka and Patten (2003) recognize this when they distinguish between the internal usage of public institutions, the public services

provided by these institutions, and private usage. My references to domains are admittedly imprecise (I haven't done the empirical work that Fishman suggested should be necessary), but they accord more or less with common practice. Nor do I attempt to consider all possible domains; most notably, I omit consideration of language management in adolescent groups or gangs.

A second assumption, presented in my earlier book (Spolsky 2004), is that language policy has three interrelated but independently describable components – practice, beliefs, and management. Language *practices* are the observable behaviors and choices – what people actually do. They are the linguistic features chosen, the variety of language used. They constitute policy to the extent that they are regular and predictable, and while studying them is made difficult by the observer's paradox that Labov (1972) identified – for an observer adds an extra participant and so modifies unobserved behavior – describing them is the task of a sociolinguistic study producing what Hymes (1974) called an ethnography of speaking. In one sense, this is the "real" policy although participants may be reluctant to admit it.

It is also critical to language management that language practices provide the linguistic context for anyone learning a language. Children's language acquisition depends in large measure on the language practices to which they are exposed. For example, immigrant parents are sometimes upset to find that their children do not know certain words in their heritage language, not realizing that they themselves regularly replace them in daily speech with words borrowed from the new language (Kopeliovich 2006).

The second important component of language policy is made up of *beliefs* about language, sometimes called an ideology. The beliefs that are most significant to language policy and management are the values or statuses assigned to named languages, varieties, and features. For instance, given the role played by language varieties in identification, the variety that I associate with my principal membership group – my nation, my educational class, my region, or my ethnic heritage – is likely to have the highest value for me, while some other varieties may be stigmatized. The status of a variant or variety derives from how many people use it and the importance of the users, and the social and economic benefits a speaker can expect by using it. Of course, beliefs are not practice: it may well be that I myself use stigmatized forms.

The third component of policy is language *management*, the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs. I use the term "management" rather than "planning" because I think it more precisely captures the nature of the phenomenon. Planning was the term used in the 1950s and 1960s in the post-war enthusiasm for correcting social problems; the subsequent failures of social and economic planning have discouraged its

continued use. The two areas, health services and education, that still attempt centralized planning in western societies, continue to be problematic.

Nekvapil (2006), approving my use of the term "management" in Spolsky (2004), provides a useful explanation of the difference. The term language *planning* was developed in the 1960s for a process relevant to the modernization of developing countries gaining independence with the ending of colonialism. It was conceived of "as the concern of technical experts with efficient techniques at their disposal, as an objective process basically independent of ideology" (Nekvapil 2006: 92) and was modeled on the social and economic planning of the period. It was seen as "rational problem-solving," although it required approval of the political authorities of the state concerned. Over time, the greater complexity of language *engineering* (another term tried by some) was recognized, so that it would have to include "a broad range of different sociolinguistic situations at different levels of enlargement (from nation to firm), of a broad range of different interests and population groups (from women to refugees), under widely different communicative circumstances (of media, channels, information processing), and foremost, of the different ideological and real, global and local sociopolitical conditions" (Jernudd 1997: 136). This wider field was formally labeled "language management" by Jernudd (1987), freeing the term "language planning" to refer to the techniques of language-problem solving of the 1970s. To confuse the issue further, some scholars prefer "Language Policy and Planning," using the word "policy" as a synonym for "plan" and "planning" for the process of implementation. The difficulty is the ambiguity of the word "policy," for a language management decision *is* a policy.

For Neustupný, Jernudd, and Nekvapil, language management starts with the individual (they call this "simple language management"), while organized language management ranges from the micro (family) to the macro (nation-state) level. The most obvious form of organized language management is a law established by a nation-state (or other polity authorized to make laws) determining some aspect of official language use: for example, a requirement to use a specific language as language of instruction in schools or in business with government agencies. Another example is the decision of the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II to change the centuries-old policy of requiring Latin for the mass. As with other aspects of language policy, management also applies to specific domains. In the family domain, efforts by immigrant parents to maintain their language constitute language management.

The theory assumes that each of these three components constitutes forces which help account for language choice. The language practices provide the models of language that help explain language learning and so establish the necessary conditions for language choice – language behavior is determined by proficiency; the beliefs explain the values that help account for individual

choice; and the management may influence speakers to modify their practice or belief.

Each of these three components within (and, as we shall see, outside) the domain is relevant. Strongest of all in effect are language practices, for in their absence there is no available model and no proficiency. As no one in my home ever spoke Yiddish, I missed the early opportunity to learn it. The child brought up in a monolingual environment is denied the possibilities open to a bilingual. Proficiency in a language, whether spoken or written, sets a necessary limit for language choice, and provides a strong instrument for implicit language management.

The other two components are also crucial. My beliefs about the varieties of language from which I may choose, based on my perceptions of their use and users, help account for my management decisions: the different values assigned to standard languages and to heritage languages regularly explain decisions of parents as to what language to speak and encourage in the home, just as they explain government decisions on national language policy.

Management also accounts for many language choices, but it is not automatically successful. It presupposes a manager: the pressures produced by language practices and beliefs are different in that they may be authorless. Consider for example the argument as to whether the spread of English is the result of demographic and economic pressures, or the planned activity of an identifiable imperialist conspirator. As a rule, I will take the position that it is management only when we can identify the manager. I do not accept a simple argument of *cui bono*, the notion that because someone benefited from a development they must have brought about the situation. A number of scholars cite rhetorical statements in favor of a language as though they proved the existence of language managers, rather than the wishful thinking of politicians and language activists.

As a first step, the model I am building tries to account for language choices on the basis of internal forces, derived from language practices, language beliefs, and language management within the domain itself. But it regularly becomes clear that there are significant forces outside the domain. First, the fact that any individual is a participant in several levels of his or her community, that is to say, any individual has different roles in different domains – I am at once a parent, a neighbor, a congregant, an employer, and a citizen – means that I am familiar with the language practices and beliefs of a number of different domains, and may well have reason to favor the values of one domain when I am in another. The men from the Papua New Guinea village, who came home from working in the plantations and chose to speak Tok Pisin, provide an example (Kulick 1992); so did the Judeo-French speaking men who worked outside the Jewish community and brought into it the co-territorial Middle High German they needed as a prized ability,

leading to the development of Yiddish (Weinreich 1980). Second, language management provides many examples of efforts to impose language practices on a lower domain, such as when an ethnic language revival movement or a school language policy tries to influence home as well as public behavior. This multilevel analysis helps explain some of the problems of centralized language management, which has to overcome practices, beliefs, and management at the lower levels. In our exploration of the significant domains, we will start with internal forces affecting a domain but also note obvious external pressures. Note also that these external forces are regularly extralinguistic too: the New Guinea plantation system, the relations between gentiles and Jews limited to trade, the ethnic movements, the role of education, all affect language policy but are not linguistic. I am suspicious then of linguicentrism, the assumption that language is a central cause of human behavior.

The model entails a number of defined speech communities, social levels, and domains, ranging from the family through various social structures and institutions up to and including nation-states and supranational groupings, each of which has pressure for language choice provided by internal and external language practices, language belief systems and ideologies, and language management efforts. We will explore this model first at the fundamental level of the family or home, and move on up steadily to the national level and beyond. Of course, a domain is a generalization, made up from looking for common examples in many different cases. When I refer to the school domain, I am generalizing from a myriad of individual schools – the theory is not challenged by individual cases, but by its inability to account for the features of an individual case. We are working not with absolutes but with typicality conditions (Jackendoff 1983): a typical school has pupils and teachers, but schools in different societies vary in many ways.

This is an exciting and challenging time to attempt to write about language management, because we seem to be on the cusp of major changes. Three examples illustrate the dynamic complexity of the phenomenon. Ireland became independent at the beginning of the twentieth century on the shoulders of a language revival movement, but by the middle of the century, when it joined the European Community, it generously passed up on having Irish named as one of the official languages of the community. When, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the European Community voted to expand by adding a dozen new countries each still insisting on its official language being used, nationalist sentiment was still alive enough for the Irish government to ask for Irish too to be added. The European Union agreed, and several million Euros were spent to translate official documents into the language and to provide interpreters for the few Irish officials and Members of the European Parliament who can use it comfortably. At the same time, the sociolinguistic reality has

changed: few Irish politicians speak Irish fluently (and none do not know English), and Dublin is now a multilingual city, reported to have more speakers of Mandarin and of Polish than of Irish, so that its multilingualism makes the old bilingual problem seem outdated (Harris 2007).

The second example of what one might call divine irony concerns the Deaf. Slowly, Deaf communities in various countries are starting to achieve recognition for Sign language. It is recognized as a foreign language in many US state universities; it is an official language in New Zealand and a few other nations (South Africa is considering making it the twelfth constitutional language), and it is now widely accepted as a language for which civil authorities should be expected to provide interpreters. Just as this is happening, the cochlear implant is threatening to reduce the number of deaf individuals to a level which will not justify the services starting at last to be offered (Spencer and Marschak 2003).

The third example is provided by what Kymlicka and Patten (2003: 3) refer to as the "shock" of the sudden surge of ethnolinguistic conflict in eastern Europe. We shall see later (chapter 11) how western European organizations attempted to apply what they felt were agreed minimal standards to conflict areas in the Balkans, only to notice that language tensions have continued also to plague nations in the west (Belgium, Spain, Canada, Italy, the United States, and Switzerland).

There is then a critical time dimension to be taken into account, as sociolinguistic ecosystems change rapidly as a result of globalization, the contrary localization movement – the Long Tail (Anderson 2006) whereby in this world of mass culture, technological advances permit smaller and smaller groups to be served – the spread of English, the wealth of time or money that permits the retrieval of a moribund heritage language, and most critically, the massive demographic movements producing hugely complex multilingual urban areas (by 2008, the United Nations Population Fund reported on June 27, 2007, more than half of the world's population [about 3.1 billion people] will live in towns and cities). Between 1996 and 2006, the number of multilingual people in New Zealand increased by over 43 percent; in urban Auckland, over 25 percent were reported to be able to speak more than one language; and diversity of languages increased so that there are now significant numbers (over 20,000) of speakers of Mandarin, Korean, and Afrikaans. In 2007, a fifth of the children in the United States were reported to live with at least one foreign born parent; four out of five are American citizens; and nearly half speak English fluently and another language at home. It is no wonder that a theory of language management is taking so long to be developed or accepted, for the reality that it is expected to account for refuses to stand still. But as Fishman has remarked, the complexity of a phenomenon is not an excuse for not attempting to generalize about it.

A final point. This is a book about language management, and so focuses on language and linguistic issues. But it takes as a fundamental premise that it is not autonomous, but rather the reflex of the social, political, economic, religious, ideological, emotional context in which human life goes on. To talk, as some do, about language policy victimizing minorities ignores the fact that language differences account for only a tiny part of prejudice, injustice, and suffering.

2 Managing language in the family

Managing speech and linguistic communities

Students of language management commonly deal with the activities of the state or nation, perhaps considering it the sole "centering institution" (Silverstein 1998: 404) or, more cautiously, one of the most central of such institutions (Blommaert 2005: 396). Silverstein himself recognizes "local linguistic communities" to be groups of people "by degree evidencing allegiance to norms of denotational (aka 'referential,' 'propositional,' 'semantic') language usage" (1998: 402). He contrasts local communities with global processes such as formation of empires and nation-states, the growth of global economies and communication, and the emergence of diasporization of people with multiple cultural allegiances. Blommaert, in his study of language management in Tanzania, notes the inadequacies of state language planning when it came up against the forces at the local level, on the one hand of "transnational centering institutions" such as capitalism, democracy, and transnational ideas of prestige, and international educational models on the other. These supranational institutions assign values to the elements and clusters of elements that define language varieties, and so help account for the nature of language practice, language attitudes, and the motivation and effect of language management at the national level. Understanding the nation, then, requires recognizing forces that impinge on it from above and below. This is the goal of this book.

The many levels at which language policy occurs is a partial explanation of "unplanned language planning," a concept proposed by Baldauf (1994) and developed further by Kaplan (1997: 298) and by Eggington (2002) to account for what goes wrong in language policy. The first example that Eggington (2002: 4) cites is "a formal language plan" that does not take into account "existing unplanned language plans with the social ecosystem." For my own part, I would rather explain these as resulting from the fact that a higher socio-political level such as a central government producing plans or policies does not allow for policies that exist at other levels, such as the business world, the religious institution, the family, or supranational institutions.