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Policy and Planning for Endangered Languages

Language policy issues are imbued with a powerful symbolism that is often linked to questions of identity, with the suppression or failure to recognise and support a given endangered variety representing a refusal to grant a 'voice' to the corresponding ethno-cultural community. This wide-ranging volume, which explores linguistic scenarios from across five continents, seeks to ignite the debate as to how and whether the interface between people, politics and language can affect the fortunes of endangered varieties. With chapters written by academics working in the field of language endangerment, and members of indigenous communities on the frontline of language support and maintenance, *Policy and Planning for Endangered Languages* is essential reading for researchers and students of language obsolescence, sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, as well as community members involved in native language maintenance.

DR MARI C. JONES is Reader in French Linguistics and Language Change at the University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Peterhouse. She has published extensively on language endangerment in relation to Norman, Welsh and Breton and lectures internationally on language revitalisation. She is Fellow of the International Centre for Language Revitalisation (Auckland), Visiting Fellow at the University of Canterbury (Christchurch, New Zealand) and Visiting Professor at the University of Bamberg. She has edited *Keeping Languages Alive* (2013) and *Endangered Languages and New Technologies* (2015).

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Preface

Language policy and planning is where linguistics meets politics.[1] The field is a relatively new addition to the discipline of linguistics: the term 'language planning' being first introduced in 1959 by Einar Haugen and the first book in the Library of Congress to include the words 'language policy' in its title being Cebollero (1945) (Spolsky 2004: 11). The subject has become increasingly important as awareness of the socio-political nature of language choices in multilingual/multi-dialectal communities has grown.

The definition and aims of language planning have been the subject of much discussion and debate (see, for example, Hornberger 1989: 7; King 1999: 111; Ricento 2006; Spolsky 2004), but there is a general consensus that it essentially involves 'deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of their language codes' (Cooper 1989: 45). Fasold (1984: 246) underlines the deliberate nature of the undertaking (the very term *language planning* implies that certain choices will be made about language behaviour), and the ideological should also be emphasised here: whatever choices are made and implemented by language planners will be done in conformity with a particular set of beliefs and principles which, as this volume will explore, are not necessarily shared by the speech community.

The ideology or ideologies that underlie language planning strategies are often at least partly attributable to what has been described as *language policy*, or 'the set of positions, principles and decisions reflecting [a] community's relationships to its verbal repertoire and communicative potential' (Bugarski 1992: 18; quoted in Schiffman 1996: 3). The strategies of language planning are therefore often formulated 'within language policy to act on linguistic communication in a community, typically by directing the development of its languages' (Schiffman 1996: 3). Policy and planning therefore can, and often do, feed into each other.

Cobarrubias and Fishman (1983: 63–6) identify four underlying objectives of language planning strategies: the achievement of *linguistic pluralism* (the rights of different languages groups to maintain and cultivate their languages on an equal basis), *assimilation and purism* (where an 'ideal' language

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variety is promoted which is associated with the speech community's social ideal and norm), *vernacularisation* (the recognition of indigenous languages instead of, or alongside, an international language of wider communication) and *internationalism* (the adoption of a language of wider communication in an official capacity in order to allow for socio-economic participation at an international level). However, when a language is endangered, a fifth objective may be added, namely *revitalisation*. Given that the overarching aim of language policy and planning is to direct and influence the use of language codes within a particular community, in other words, to set a speech variety on its feet, these considerations are clearly central to many contexts of language revitalisation, which aims to reverse language shift. And yet, until the 1990s, many policies largely ignored endangered languages (Sallabank 2011: 277).

Many of the aims and strategies of language planners working in communities that are home to obsolescent varieties parallel those being implemented in communities where the local language is not under threat since, in both contexts, language planners aim to promote a variety as an 'acceptable' code in official domains. Much effort is channelled into educational activities and the media (both broadcast and social), the cultural importance of the variety is emphasised, and linguistic legislation serves as a medium through which power is negotiated between different speech communities. Similar social actors are also involved in both cases: politicians and administrators often focus on status planning, or the 'cultural and legal actions which can be taken to promote a language' (Bartens 2001: 29), whereas linguists often focus on corpus planning, which modifies 'the nature of the language itself, changing the corpus as it were' via changes in vocabulary, orthography and structure (Kloss 1969: 181). However, when language planning aims to reverse language shift, acquisition planning is also important, as this is specifically aimed at increasing the number of speakers of the language or variety in question.

Where varieties are endangered, language policy issues often take the form of specific ideologies that underlie language planning strategies. They may additionally be imbued with a powerful symbolism that is often linked to questions of identity, with the suppression or failure to recognise and support a given endangered variety representing a refusal to grant a 'voice' to the corresponding ethnocultural community. As such, in this context, the goals of language policies may be specific and practical in nature, such as orthographic reform, or more emblematic, such as measures for the promotion and protection of vulnerable languages. However, as 'linguists … have no political power' and politicians 'generally have no (socio)linguistic knowledge' (Arends et al. 1995: 68), the necessary interchange of ideas between the two groups is often uncoordinated or non-existent. This often results in the 'language promotion

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process being slowed down in a significant manner' (Bartens 2001: 29), which, clearly, can prove problematic for a language whose speaker numbers are declining.

This volume considers how and whether the interface between people, politics and language can affect the fortunes of the endangered linguistic varieties involved. Among the general questions considered are: Can policy really alter linguistic behaviour, or does it merely ratify changes already under way within the speech community? Do governments have a moral obligation to support endangered languages? Should linguists play a role in shaping language policy and, if so, what should that role be? When policy decisions are at odds with the will of the indigenous speech community, which will triumph? What are the differences and main benefits of so-called 'top-down' language planning, where decisions are taken at an official level, and so-called 'bottom-up' language planning, where the decisions are taken by the community itself?

The volume comprises fourteen chapters which offer a rich diversity of perspectives on this topic drawn from a range of different languages spoken on five different continents. It begins with three chapters that discuss and assess different types of language planning strategy. Lenore Grenoble illustrates the complexities involved in creating and implementing language policy in the geo-political territory of the circumpolar Arctic. She considers how the Arctic Indigenous Language Vitality Initiative is currently attempting to address these issues by blending 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches. This 'blending' of approaches is also highlighted in James McLellan and Gary Jones's discussion of language planning strategies in Borneo. Julia Sallabank gives an overview of the 'top-down' language planning strategies used with the Kanak languages of New Caledonia, and suggests that they are at their most effective when the linguists who formulate them also consider the local social context.

Although the contribution of schooling to the implementation of language policy and planning forms is touched on by many chapters in the volume, the next four all have a specific focus on the implementation of language policy within the education system. Fabienne Goalabré offers a case study of two Celtic languages, Breton and Gaelic, asking why parents choose immersion schooling for their children and assessing the effectiveness of this method of schooling as a tool of acquisition planning in the context of language revitalisation. Andrew James Davies and Prysor Mason Davies examine the attitudes of college students towards the education that they are receiving in another Celtic language, Welsh. It is demonstrated that, although speakers may be attached to an endangered language emotionally, policy makers should not forget that speakers are, nevertheless, strategic choosers who are mindful of the 'commodity' value of different languages in their post-education life. Moving next

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to the Americas, Margarita Valdovinos highlights some of the challenges that can arise when the Mexican government's language policies are implemented in public education. Her analysis demonstrates how the social context of the Cora can hamper the concrete enactment of these policies, which are often created without reference to community practices and traditions. In a similar vein, Ari Sherris and Jill Robbins illustrate how, in the state of Florida, the successful teaching of Mikasuki requires a dynamic, rather than a fixed, view of local language policy.

There now follow several chapters which investigate the inherent value of language policy and planning. Rawinia Higgins and Poia Rewi describe the situation of Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand, and ask whether the mere fact of having a language policy in place for an endangered language is always enough to reverse language shift. They also present their ZePA model, a diagnostic tool for identifying and measuring increase in status that arises from language planning. Claudia Soria explores a similar theme in relation to four endangered varieties spoken in Italy, namely Sardinian, Friulian, Piedmontese and Lombard, demonstrating that, in this context, official recognition has helped to change linguistic behaviour. Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska gives an account of the current position of Kashubian, spoken in Poland. Using an ethnographic approach, she investigates how certain language planning measures have led to an improvement in the current position of the language in general but have had, as yet, little impact on some important everyday domains. Damien Mooney and Aurélie Joubert analyse the current position of Occitan from two different perspectives. The former demonstrates how, in France, the development of language policy at a national level can be hindered by conflicting revitalisation movements. The latter examines the 'trans-border' (France/Spain) situation of Occitan, showing how language policies can affect speakers' linguistic perceptions, and seeks to determine why the relatively successful situation of Occitan in Spain does not match, or even bolster, its less empowered position in France.

Rebecca Mitchell moves the focus to Africa, where she observes how negative speaker attitudes can undermine efforts to promote the indigenous languages of Cameroon. The volume closes with Michael Tresidder's discussion of the situation in Cornwall, where he examines the challenges that arise as, after the disappearance of all the traditional native speakers, language planning attempts to bring Cornish 'back from the dead' via language revival.

The volume emphasises the importance and value of examining language policy critically in order to help language planners and the social actors of revitalisation promote and achieve their desired outcomes for endangered languages. It highlights the way in which, in this context, linguistics interfaces

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not just with politics but also with major areas of contemporary debate such as decolonisation, urbanisation, education and discrimination.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my beloved father, Philip Griffith Jones, who inspired me, encouraged me and taught me so much. I will miss him every day of my life. Diolch am bopeth, Dad annwyl.

Mari C. Jones

NOTES

1 Some of the material included in this discussion is drawn from Mari C. Jones and Ishtla Singh, *Exploring Language Change*, published by Routledge in 2005, pp. 105–9. It is reproduced with permission.

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