

NATIONAL LANGUAGES AND LANGUAGE PLANNING

1. A unique diglossic case in Paraguay

- 90 per cent of the population speaks Guaraní;
- 60 per cent speaks Spanish;
- Spanish: official language
Guaraní: symbolizes tradition and culture; it is considered as the national language;
- Positive attitude to Guaraní – in other South American nations the colonizers' language is dominant – the indigenous languages have little status there.

Study the Example #1 on p. 100.
Work on the Exercise #1, on p. 102. (answer on p. 123.)

2. National and official languages

A *national language* is the language of a political, cultural and social unit; it symbolizes national unity.

An *official language* is used government business; its function is practical, and it is not symbolic.

(p. 102-103)

Several scenarios may exist:

- Two official languages and one national language
Paraguay: Guaraní and Spanish (official languages)
Guarani (national language);

Tanzania: Swahili and English (official languages)
Swahili (national language).
- Three official languages and one national languages (Bislama)
Vanuatu: Bislama, English and French (official languages)
Bislama (national language).

Study the Example #2 on p. 102.

In multilingual countries the selection of the *national language* may be motivated by political reasons: e.g., establishing an identity of newly formed nations: for example, Hebrew in Israel, Malay in Malaysia, etc.

To declare an *official language* can be problematic in multilingual countries, for example, in India fourteen regional languages serve as official languages in addition to English and Hindi – this is for the whole of the country, but different states have their own official languages as well.

3. Official status and minority languages

Minorities in many countries have achieved their language to be an official language. For example, in New Zealand, Maori is now an official language – although English is the language of the majority, English is not declared an official language – similarly, in England and in the United States English is not legally an official language.

Study the Examples 3 and 4 (pp. 104-105). Comment!

What about the Official Languages Act (1968-69) in Canada? Comment!

4. Language planning

Planned language change and planned social change are highly interrelated activities.

(Fishman, 1970)

The logic of language planning is dictated by recognizing that language is a *societal resource*.

The importance of this resource is due to the communicational and identity values attached by the community to one or more languages.

Language planning is defined most simply as deliberate language change. It covers a variety of activities, such as developing standard varieties, spelling reforms, developing orthography, advice on non-sexist terminology, regulating new sources of vocabulary, etc.
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“Language planning is a government authorized, long-term, sustained and conscious effort to alter a language’s function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems”.

(Weinstein, 1980)

Language planning can proceed by identifying the concrete areas of society that demand planned action regarding language resources.

5. Planning for a national official language -- developing a standard variety

There are four aspects of standardization (see Lecture #4):

- a. selection of norm -- the variety to be developed;
- b. codification of form -- standardizing the linguistic features of the code.
Corpus planning: developing grammars, dictionaries, etc.
- c. elaboration of function -- use of the codified language (in administration, education, literature, etc.): extending the codified forms for additional functions;
- d. acceptance by the speech community -- enhancing prestige: *Status planning*.

Corpus planning (based on the *allocation of its use*); it is aimed at developing that language (or variety) for the functioning in all areas in society.

Status planning: (based on the *importance of the language*); it changes the *function* of a language (or variety) and the *rights* of those using it;

Steps in language planning:

Study the Table 5.1 on p. 108.

STANDARD VARIETY: *A characteristic societal treatment of language, given sufficient social diversity and need for elaboration.*

What about the objectives of language planning for minority languages?

Review the Skolt Saami case -- relate government efforts there to the concepts of “corpus planning” and “status planning”. (See .ppt presentation in Lecture #4; for more details see McRobbie 1995 on the instructor’s web page).

Corrubias (1983) has proposed four typical ideologies that may aid actual decision making in the process of language planning:

(i) *Linguistic assimilation:*

United States (English);

Guam (English, until 1973 Chamorro did not have official status);

The former Soviet Union (russification of minorities);
France (French),
etc.

(ii) *Linguistic pluralism:*

Canada (English, French);
Belgium (Dutch, French, German);
Switzerland (French, Italian, German, Romansh);
etc.

(iii) *Vernacularization:* developing an indigenous language for functioning as an official language.

Papua New Guinea (Tok Pisin);
Philippines (Tagalog);
etc.

(iv) *Internationalism:* a non-indigenous language functions as the official language.

Singapore, India (English);
etc.

6. A case study: Developing a standard variety in Norway

- Selecting a code;
 - Codification and elaboration;
 - Acceptance.
- } pp. 111-114

