LANGUAGE PLANNING AND PLANNED LANGUAGES: HOW CAN PLANNED LANGUAGES INFORM LANGUAGE PLANNING?

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ABSTRACT

The field of language planning (LP) has largely ignored planned languages. Of classic descriptions of LP processes, only Tauli (preceded by Wüster) suggests that planned languages (what Wüster calls *Plansprache*) might bear on LP theory and practice. If LP aims "to modify the linguistic behaviour of some community for some reason," as Kaplan and Baldauf put it, creating a language *de novo* is little different. Language policy and planning are increasingly seen as more local and less official, and occasionally more international and cosmopolitan. Zamenhof's work on Esperanto provides extensive material, little studied, documenting the formation of the language and linking it particularly to issues of supranational LP. Defining LP decision-making, Kaplan & Baldauf begin with context and target population. Zamenhof's Esperanto came shortly before Ben-Yehuda's revived Hebrew. His target community was (mostly) the world's educated elite; Ben-Yehuda's was worldwide Jewry. Both planners were driven not by linguistic interest but by sociopolitical ideology rooted in reaction to anti-Semitism and imbued with the idea of progress. Their territories had no boundaries, but were not imaginary. Function mattered as much as form (Haugen's terms), status as much as corpus. For Zamenhof, status planning involved emphasis on Esperanto's ownership by its community – a collective planning process embracing all speakers (cf. Hebrew). Corpus planning included a standardized European semantics, lexical selectivity based not simply on standardization but on representation, and the development of written, and literary, style. Esperanto was successful as linguistic system and community language, less as generally accepted lingua franca. Its terminology development and language cultivation offers a model for language revival, but Zamenhof's somewhat limited analysis of language economy left him unprepared to deal with language as power.

KEY WORDS

CLASSIFICATION

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INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE PLANNING

In an article published in the journal *Language Problems and Language Planning* in 1977 [1], Moshe Nahir described "the five aspects of language planning" as purification, revival, reform, standardization, and lexical modernization. A second, highly influential article in the same journal seven years later [2] added six additional "aspects": language spread, terminology unification, stylistic simplification, interlingual communication, language maintenance, and auxiliary-code standardization. In describing these aspects of language planning, Nahir sought to focus on the goals of planning rather than the processes: the processes had been identified by Haugen [3-5], but the goals remained undefined.

A great deal has happened in language planning since Nahir published his two articles. There has been a shift away from seeing language planning as a function of the state or of institutions toward seeing planning and policy as occurring at all levels, from the most formal to the most informal [6]. Furthermore, the optimism that surrounded the first British and American forays into the field has largely given way to the realization that planning the future of language is at best an inexact science, at worst an activity unlikely to achieve lasting results. Change may come about through conscious desire, but that desire tends to be that of the collective, or a politicized part of that collective, rather than the deliberate efforts of individuals or even institutions.

Nahir's article was unusual in giving room, under the general heading of interlingual communication, to two concerns often shunted aside by LP experts: terminology unification, and auxiliary languages – languages created by design for the purpose of communication across regional and ethnic languages, now more commonly known as planned languages (the term *Plansprache* was created in 1931 by Wüster [7]: see below [8]). While terminology unification is certainly an element in the field of language planning, and while terminology science is an important and ongoing pursuit, it receives relatively short shrift in general theories of language planning, perhaps because of its fundamentally interlingual and technical nature and also because it sits somewhere between lexicology on the one hand and semantics on the other (terminology is essentially concerned with concepts rather than lexis; its goal – both a corpus goal and a status goal – is consistency; its territory is the relationships among concepts).

PLANNED LANGUAGES

As for planned languages, what one might describe as the Anglo-Saxon branch of language planning – going back to Le Page's *The National Language Question* of 1964 [9] and Rubin and Jernudd's *Can Language Be Planned?* of 1971 [10] – has largely ignored planned languages. This is unfortunate, since the only such language to develop an authentic speech community, namely Esperanto, displays in its ongoing development many of the processes that are of direct interest to specialists in language planning [11, 12]. Indeed, Esperanto today is not fundamentally different from other languages, even if its origins are different [13, 14].

Of classic descriptions of language planning processes and goals, e.g. [5, 15-18], only Tauli [15] suggests that planned languages might be relevant more generally to language planning theory and practice. Tauli's sense of the field was different from that of later scholars in that he saw the field as existing long before it had a name (the term goes back at least to Bodmer [19]) – particularly in terminology standardization and in planned (auxiliary) languages.

TERMINOLOGY SCIENCE

In truth, the fields of terminology science and planned language are near allied historically: Eugen Wüster, generally regarded as the founder of terminology science, began his work at

the age of nineteen as a result of a commission from a minor publisher to compile a small Esperanto dictionary, having learned that language several years before. He became fascinated by the strengths and weaknesses of the system of word formation in Esperanto, an issue that had already preoccupied René de Saussure, brother of Ferdinand, who had published extensively on the subject [20]. The result of Wüster's interest was a far more extensive dictionary that occupied him for much of the next decade (four sections of this Esperanto-German "encyclopedic dictionary" appeared between 1923 and 1929, until its publication was halted by the advent of the Nazi regime [21]), and that provided the theoretical underpinning of his major work *Internationale Sprachnormung in der Technik* [7]. Out of this effort, and parallel efforts by Ernest Drezen (also a speaker of Esperanto) in the Soviet Union, grew the terminological work of the International Standards Association, later the ISO [21; pp.243-254]. Wüster sought to apply the consistency that he perceived in Esperanto (imperfect and unsystematic as it was in some instances), creating transparent Esperanto models that could then serve as starting points for terminology development in other languages (on Wüster, and on terminology and Esperanto, see W. Blanke [22] and in this collection).

Esperanto was imperfect for Wüster's purposes (though better than ethnic languages and more established than other planned languages) because it was not fully schematic and was not designed with terminological transparency in mind. It was one among hundreds of language schemes developed by individuals for the purpose of interlingual communication [23-27]. It is customary to divide such schemes into two categories – so-called *a priori* (or philosophical) schemes, based on the encyclopedic classification of all phenomena and linked with the development of mathematical logic (Descartes, Newton, and Leibnitz all dabbled in a priori language schemes [28]), and *a posteriori* schemes based to varying degrees on existing ethnic languages, particularly European languages. This latter category, our principal concern here, can be further subdivided into schematic and naturalistic projects, according to their emphasis on mnemonic systems (the so-called correlatives in Esperanto, for example) on the one hand, and their following the vagaries of ethnic languages on the other. In general, such projects are more schematic than ethnic languages, but less schematic than so-called philosophical languages. In the case of Esperanto, for example, the system of word formation familiar to us from Latin and only partially consistent in modern western languages, is made fully applicable in all instances in Esperanto, thereby allowing for the constant expansion of the language through the application of simple morphological rules.

ZAMENHOF AS LANGUAGE PLANNER

These characteristics of Esperanto are a direct product of the work of its creator, Lazar Ludwik Zamenhof, but many characteristics of the language do not have so simple a genesis. Unlike most authors of planned languages, Zamenhof's interest was not primarily linguistic, but humanitarian [29-32]. His Esperanto, published in 1887, in Warsaw, came at about the same time as Ben Yehuda's advocacy of an expanded and modernized Hebrew. Both Zamenhof and Ben Yehuda were born in the same corner of northern Europe: they both considered themselves Litvaks, Lithuanian Jews. Both were driven to an interest in the unifying power of language by the anti-Semitic violence that swept across the Russian Empire in the 1880s. Their interests, in other words, lay in community and ideology rather than in language per se. Function mattered as much as form (Haugen's terms), status as much as corpus.

Zamenhof's work on Esperanto provides extensive material, little studied, documenting the formation of the language and linking it particularly to issues of supranational language planning. While much can be gleaned from his writings about the linguistic intricacies of planning a language, perhaps more germane is his emphatic belief in the need to create a *community of speakers* who could take ownership of the language and expand and adapt it

through the use of the open systems and principles that he had built into the language. Unlike other authors of planned languages, Zamenhof's interest was not control but participation. Now, 128 years later, the vast majority of the vocabulary has been created by the speakers of the language rather than its originator; grammatical forms, while based on the original principles, have moved in new directions; pronunciation has shifted; in short, Esperanto is subject to language change like all other languages.

Of course, a planned language is different from a conventional ethnic language in that certain historical processes are reversed: writing comes before speech; whereas one of the goals of language planning may be standardization, planned languages begin with standardization and progress to the spontaneous and non-canonical; community is a manifestation of language, rather than language a manifestation of community. Furthermore, language and community advance hand in hand: everyone has to learn the language. This means that it begins as a community of imperfect speakers (much, by the way, as Hebrew did in Palestine [16; pp.11-14]) who must gradually master and use the system. Arguably, all three forms of language planning in Cooper's definition – corpus, status, acquisition – must be applied at once.

For Zamenhof, status planning involved emphasis on Esperanto's ownership by its community – a collective planning process embracing all speakers. Corpus planning included a standardized European semantics (with its attendant inconsistencies, as noted by Wüster, [8; pp.27-43]; cf. Schubert [33]), lexical selectivity based not simply on standardization but also on representativeness, and the development of a coherent and recognizable style.

ESPERANTO AND LANGUAGE REVIVAL

The parallels with Modern Hebrew are obvious. It is axiomatic that the most powerful unifier among threatened languages is the use of the language in the home. Thus, the defenders of Irish point to the shortsightedness of a policy that puts emphasis on the teaching of the language in the schools and does relatively little to preserve it in the home [34]. Yet Hebrew moved in the opposite direction: from school into the home, as noted by Cooper [16; p.13]. While the number of speakers of Esperanto who acquired the language in the home is still small and their language use has little influence on linguistic norms in Esperanto [35, 36], some of the most prominent members of the Esperanto community would consider themselves native speakers.

Perhaps the place where language planning and Esperanto intersect most obviously is in language revival [37, 38]. Languages such as Cornish, for example, are faced with problems closely parallel to those of Esperanto. Cornish survives in written texts. whereas only the germs of Esperanto existed in Latin and western European linguistic precedents. However, the users of Cornish are mostly imperfect speakers; it requires acquisition planning in the form of textbooks and other learning aids; all of its speakers speak it as a second language and under limited circumstances; it requires modernization and expansion. While planning for the expansion of Esperanto (both corpus planning and status planning) cannot be regarded strictly as language *revival*, the problems overlap.

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

The same can be said of a number of Nahir's other so-called processes, notably language standardization, language spread, language maintenance, and of course terminology development and unification. While the Esperanto Academy makes an effort to preserve and establish standards, for the most part the process of terminology development is informal: the ideological basis of Esperanto – the promotion of international understanding – serves a normative function by motivating speakers to maximize their comprehensibility. At the same

time, an active original literature permits experimentation, and a translated literature allows for the expansion of the lexis and the application of the language in new ways; literary translation was an important element in Zamenhof's agenda and has characterized Esperanto from the beginning [39]. While terminology development in Esperanto may be regarded as insufficient both in theory and in practice, at least there is lively debate on the subject [22, 40-42] – again, debate which could and should be shared with language revivalists dealing with similar problems.

Esperanto speakers are nothing if not contentious: there is constant tension between the neologists and the traditionalists (see, for example, Piron [43]), and between the activists and those who see Esperanto as primarily a language community rather than a movement [44]. Perhaps the most persistent difficulty faced by this community is simple language maintenance: maintaining the resources needed for the full exploitation of the language (publishing, artistic creation, journalism, radio, television, music), and preserving language loyalty. With over a century of experience of such matters, there is much that the Esperanto movement and community could share with language revival movements [45]. If such sharing is currently not taking place, this may be a result of lack of attention to Esperanto with its hundreds of thousands of speakers and its long history – a lack of attention arising from the imperfect association of Esperanto with dreamers and hobbyists and a failure to recognize its significant intellectual contribution to language planning through such individuals as Eugen Wüster and his successors.

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