ABSTRACT
        A new and important part of the training and
education of English as a second language teachers is the course in
"Language Policy," which centers on the relationship between politics
and language teaching in developing countries, i.e., on language
planning. A better understanding and more knowledge might be had by
including static and declining countries and areas and by the study
of special fields which can be called the parameters of "language
ecology." The ecology of a language would comprise, in addition to an
assessment of institutional support, facts about its classification,
speakers, domains of use, internal varieties, written traditions,
standardization, and the attitudes of its users toward it and
concurrent languages. Such ecological typology would necessitate the
study of language policy and linguistics, demography, sociology,
dialectology, philology, prescriptivism, lexicography,
ethnolinguistics, and dialinguistics. We need to search for basic
principles and concepts of these studies which can be used to arm the
English teacher against ignorance, particularly since personality can
hardly be separated from language--the key to culture and to
learning. (Author)

THE LANGUAGE POLICY COURSE AND LANGUAGE ECOLOGY


Joe Darwin Palmer


The University of Michigan - Dearborn


There are a thousand ways of talking and
words don't help if the spirit is absent.

-- Henry Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi


As language teachers we must try our best to keep alive the spirit that en-

ables us to talk with our students. This spirit no doubt is our ability to pro-

mote learning, the goal of teaching. One teaches of necessity and one learns of

necessity, but the one activity does not necessarily flow from the other unless

the teacher has the ability to organize the content of the material he is teaching.

He must organize the lessons, Stevick has pointed out, so that their social and

topical dimensions lead to occasions the students find useful, specific, stim-

ulating and open ended (Stevick 1971, p. 54).

One of the greatest problems facing a foreign language teacher is that he

and his students often have nothing to say to each other. We have on occasion

observed futile and even harmful classroom exercises weakened even further by

the teacher's inability to relate the lesson to the when and how of language

use, that is, to animate it, to give it spirit, in spite of his training as a

foreign-language teacher. A fool with tools is still a fool, even though he

has taken the course in foreign language teaching methods, has been exposed to

analysis of the native and target language, and has acquired a general education.

If the teacher and his students have nothing to say to each other, we can be

sure that the students will not learn anything to say to anyone else.  In such

a situation we cannot blame the students for reticence.  They are usually so

respectful of the teacher that they dare not intrude.  Furthermore, their first

goal in the course is probably a good final grade instead of language competence.

So the responsibility for having something to say to the students falls on the

shoulders of the teacher.  And how is he to have something to say?

I suggest that an answer to this question may be implicit in a common

observation:  A teacher is more effective during his second year on the job

than he is during the first year, and consequently we expect an experienced

teacher to do a better job than a beginner.  That is to say, everying else being

equal, with experience a teacher acquires an understanding of his students that

is informed by his knowledge of the groups to which they belong.  One might say

that the teacher's effectiveness is proportional to how well he understands

his students' culture, in the broadest sense.

But culture is not quite the right word.  Many well-educated native speakers

of English with years of foreign residence and strong foreign acculturation become

weak and fumbling foreign language teachers when they are pressed into service,

mostly because, I think, they are ignorant about language.  Given in-service

training in foreign language methodology, they improve somewhat as teachers, yet

they cling to false ideas about language -- their own and their students'.  Like

the laymen that they are, they perpetuate folk attitudes toward language and

society and the individual.  It is often not knowledge of culture that they lack;

it is knowledge of the place of their students' language in determining and re-
flecting culture. Likewise, they do not understand the "systematic covariance
of linguistic structure and social structure" which sociolinguistics tries to
demonstrate (Bright, 1966).

In his Sociolinguistics Bright shows the dimensions of the sociologists'
concern with language: 1) the existence of class dialects as they reflect social
stratification, 2) special linguistic forms which show respect or the lack of
it, 3) the settings and contexts of certain styles, 4) the relation between
synchronic and diachronic language study, 5) folk linguistics, 6) the extent
of diversity of languages within a group, and 7) how language policy is applied
in social planning, in education and public administration.

Now all this material is the same subject matter that is studied, with dif-
ferent particular interests and approaches, under the names ethnolinguistics,
linguistic anthropology, sociology of language, language change, bilingualism,
language variability, language contact, language standardization, and even to
some extent psycholinguistics. And it is exactly knowledge of this sort that the
well-trained and well-acculturated teacher of a foreign language needs to have at
his command in order to be able to adapt his teaching materials in such a way
that his lessons will become useful, specific, stimulating and open-ended.

This is a large claim I'm making and a pretentious one. It seems to promise
much that will be difficult to deliver. It is also rather vague in that it lacks
a focus of definition and attention, but I would suggest that it is in these
areas that we need research, experimentation, and controlled studies. The sev-
eral names of fields of study subsumed under the rubric sociolinguistics sug-
gest kinds of knowledge which are probably outside the purview of most language
teachers and impossible of attainment, given the small amount of time we have in

which to train them.  Yet the feeling that this is what a teacher ought to know
persists.

That a knowledge of politics and society is necessary to successful foreign
language teaching is suggested by Cripwell in his article "English as a Com-
munication Skill:  Implications for Teacher Training" (1972).  He says that

> The two main causes of failure are that too little at-
> tention is paid first to the demands made on the school
> system, and secondly to the political, social, and
> economic setting of the educational system.

The implication is quite clear:  those who are concerned with language acquisition
ought to be aware of all the social factors which affect the teaching, learning,
and use of the language.

One successful approach to the problem is a course in language policy in
which students prepare studies of institutional support for the teaching of
languages.  Such an elective course in language policy has been offered to EFL
teachers at the University of California at Los Angeles, the American University
in Cairo, Egypt, and at The University of Michigan.  This course has generally
been concerned with the relationship between language use and the formulation
and implementation of official and de facto political, educational, religious,
economic, and artistic attitudes toward languages, especially in developing
countries.

In one case the aims of the course have included helping the teacher view
his "professional skills within a social and educational framework broader than
that of the classroom," and to consider the place of English in language policy
vis-a-vis national and official vernaculars and second languages, and their re-
lation to education and official policies, and the consequences of colonialism
(Gorman, 1972).

These aims show that the course is organized around politics and language,

or glottopolitics, if one prefers synthetic words. Politics is one of the legs
of the tripod called social science, the other two being sociology and anthro-
pology. As such, politics is a pertinent and topical study which leads the
student into sociological and anthropological concerns, since none of these
studies makes much sense without the other two.

When I spoke to members of Professor Prator's class in language policy at
the American University in Cairo in 1972 on language policy in Thailand, I was
amazed at the great wealth of material on this topic, and I was chagrined at
my lack of ability to organize it adequately. I realized first of all that
everything I was to say depended in some basic way on the audience having a
knowledge of the physical and political geography of Southeast Asia, something
I could not assume. Then I saw that the demography of Southeast Asia is so com-
plex that I did not really begin to understand it myself, even after two years'
residence in the area. How could I possibly give the students an understanding
of the complex, patternless facts I wanted to get across? With the help of maps
and an indulgent audience I spoke for an hour on the topic. At the end of the
session I realized that I could go on talking for many hours and not exhaust
the subject, for I had no conceptual framework in which to capture the general-
izations I was making about the facts I was presenting. I was fortunate at
having at hand Richard Noss' Language Policy, Higher Education and Development
in Southeast Asia (1967), a truly stunning work and a model of its kind. But
I felt that the facts it contains were beyond the understanding of an unsophisticated
audience, including myself. And so I began to think about the sort of concepts
which could inform one's knowledge of sociolinguistics insofar as this knowledge
would make one a better teacher of language.

In surveying the literature of sociolinguistics and language planning I came across Einar Haugen's The Ecology of Language (1972), a collection of essays selected and introduced by Anwar S. Dil, and there in the title essay I found a rationale which seems to promise a way into the complex situation that every modern language is in. Haugen calls "the study of any given language and its environment" the ecology of the language. This environment is in part the society that uses the language, but part of its environment is in the minds of its users, so the ecology is part psychological and part sociological in that the language interacts with other languages in the minds of its speakers and it interacts with society when it is used for communication.

There are several metaphors that serve to define the elusive kind of behavior we call language, among which are the biological, the instrumental, and the structural metaphors. Languages do have structural form, as does the Eiffel Tower, they are used instrumentally as tools, and, most importantly, they have life and purpose, that is to say, the live in some sense. This biological metaphor, it seems to me, offers the best way of seeing a language in its true state. And to understand a living thing necessitates a study of its ecology. As Alan Watts has observed:

> ". . .every scientific discipline for the study of living organisms . . . must, from its own special standpoint, develop a science of ecology -- literally "the logic of the household" -- or the study of organism/environment fields. (Watts, p. 84)

But Haugen has shown that the environment of language is two-fold. It is both the minds of its users and the society in which they use it. And Watts supports this observation:

> We think in terms of languages and images we didn't invent . . . We copy emotional reactions. . .We do not exist apart from society [which is] . . .our extended mind and body. (Watts, p. 63)

So how do we discover the environment, that is to say, the ecology of language? For any language, we answer these ten questions.

1. What is its classification? What is its relation to other languages? These questions are answered by historical and descriptive linguistics.

2. Who are its users? This is a question for linguistic demography to answer as it defines the geography, locale, religion and social classes of its users.

3. What are its domains of use? Properly a question for sociolinguistics, it has to do with the extent of use of the language, socially and geographically.

4. What are the concurrent languages? That is to say, what other languages might its speckers know or be in contact with? Is diglossia an expected feature?

5. What are the internal varieties of the language? What are the regional dialects of the language? To what extent do social registers or styles reflect a knowledge of the language?

6. What are the written traditions? Is the language a part of a larger culture? Do philology and religion play a part in determining what is acceptable?

7. To what extent is the lanugage standardized? Does prescriptive linguistics support traditionally correct forms? Has the language been codified and unified in any way?

8. What institutional support does the language have? Do government, education, business and general culture give it a definite place?

9. What are the attitudes of the users of the language toward it? To what extent does it reflect the intimacy or status of its users? How does it inform the user's personality?

10. Where does the language stand and where is it going in comparison with other languages of the world and those languages which its users come into contact with? That is, where would you place the language in a typology of ecological classification?

These ten concepts can be listed for convenience as follows:

1. Classification

2. Users

3. Domains of Use

4. Concurrent Languages

5. Internal Varieties

6. Written Traditions

7. Standardization

8. Institutional Support

9. Users' Attitudes

10. Typology of Ecological Classification

Using this framework. it is possible to ask and answer many pertinent questions

about the languages involved in the school situation.  I would like to point

out briefly a few directions such inquiries can take, and point out some of the

interconnections among various studies which can be included in language ecology.

1. Classification. William Gage's "The African Language Picture" presents ten

language zones which are overlaid to some extent by two linguae francae --

Swahili and Arabic.  This study rests on historical and descriptive studies of

the languages of Africa and their classification in language families.  This is

the sort of information which ought to be available for every language in the

world.  The Voegelins' Languages of the World . . .(1964) promises to provide

such information.

2. Users. Linguistic demography is a branch of geography, many studies of which

are generally available for various parts of the world.  The point here is that

locating the users of the language and defining them by social class and religion

is best got at by the study of demography.

3. Domains of Use. This is the province of sociology proper as it uses language as a defining factor in studies of society. For example, a language can sometimes be shown to be a restricted code, such as Switzerdutsch, Cairene, or Yiddish, or the opposite, a lingua franca.

4. Concurrent Languages. The study of bilingualism has informed much of our knowledge of psycholinguistics. Stewart typed languages as 1) standard, 2) classical, 3) artificial, 4) vernacular, 5) dialect, 6) creole, and 7) pidgin (Stewart, 1968). Haugen offered further useful concepts such as importation, substitution, contactual dialect, learner's dialect, and linguistic accommodation; and a study of bilingualism in which the second language is seen as supplementary, complementary, or replacive (Haugen, 1971). I would suggest that Selinker's recent notion of interlanguage, the language acquirer's own personal variety of the second language, neatly intersects certain concepts of bilingualism and leads through the idea of fossilization to psycholinguistics (Selinker, 1972).

5. Internal Varieties. Information on regional varieties is available for many languages, but the study of registers and styles has only begun.

6. Written Traditions. The entent to which the speakers of a language use it in sharing part of a larger culture depends to a great degree on whether the language is not written at all, is normally written, or is used in the physical sciences (Ferguson, 1962). The use of the language in literature and written communication -- newspapers, textbooks, and magazines -- reflects its readers' sophistication as regards their participation in national and regional culture.

7. Standardization. Most languages are not written and are not standardized, for the unification and codification of a language depend as do the written traditions on the place of the language in a larger culture, or on a government's

attempts to impose standards by way of unifying the people politically and

socially. Ray's <u>Language Standardization</u> (1960) is the basic work in this

field.

8. Institutional Support. At this point we return to our starting point in

language policy. Some language policy problems are caused by misconceptions

about particular languages, relationships among languages, and relationships

between languages and culture (Noss, 1971). Indeed, in the language problems

of newly independent states, the cultural questions are the most fundamental

(LePage, 1964). Case studies and analyses of such questions can be found in

Rubin and Jernudd (1971), in Fishman, Ferguson, and Das Gupta (1968), and in

Rice (1962). Some practical effects of language policies around the world can

be found in Kaplan's report on the ELS Teacher Education Program (1971).

9. Users' Attitudes. People's attitudes toward each other are closely reflected

by their language, as we know through studies such as Labov's (1968) of stratifica-

tion. They use special forms under certain conditions -- for example, Javanese

and Thai forms of respect -- and certain styles for certain people -- for example,

Nootka has special styles for kids, dwarfs, hunchbacks, the one-eyed, and the

uncircumcized (Bright, 1966). Factors of language use such as <u>status</u> and

<u>intimacy</u> help define users' attitudes (Brown and Gilman, 1960). Recently Keenan

(1971) has suggested the importance of <u>status</u> among several factors of presup-

position in linguistic semantics. He contends that

> Many sentences require that certain culturally defined conditions
> or contexts be satisfied in order for an utterance to be under-
> stood. . . These conditions are naturally called presupposi-
> tions of the sentence. They are
>
> a.  status and kind of relations among the participants
> b.  age, sex, and generation relations among the participants
> c.  status, kin, age, sex, and generation relation's between
>     participants and individuals mentioned in the sentence . . .

[this list is incomplete here]

Thus a knowledge of ethnology, how the individual regards himself and others, may be essential in theoretical linguistics, just as it surely is essential in the ecology of a language.

10 Typology of Ecological Classification. In order to type a language, all of the previous nine concepts must be applied to the language in question. The resulting information may be used to give intellectual substance to the studies we are calling sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics.

In summary, the ecology of language offers a set of concepts and questions about the environment of a language, both social and psychological, such that answers to the questions and illustrations of the concepts give us knowledge about the users of the language which can be used to inform those decisions of language policy on which we may have some influence as teachers and administrators, and to inform our own teaching of English, that we may do it better.

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