

# **ELUCIDATING LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY IN MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITIES**

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## **Abstract**

Language Planning and Policy in multilingual nations needs to be properly defined and described because; it concerns human beings, their behaviours, attitudes, emotions, and their relationships with one another (Adegbija, 2004). Due to the importance of language planning, Du Plessis (1994:284) argued that status planning is an aspect of language planning and management, with “people-planning”. The formulations and implementations, of language planning and policy in many multilingual nations such as Nigeria have been integral parts/elements of social and educational policies. Questions of national and official language selection, of orthographic selection and spelling standardization of language use in government, judiciary and education, standardization and modernization of language are the functions of language planning and policy. Reagon (2006) noted that language planning and policy activities are not limited to spoken languages, and that LPP has a growing significance in sign languages and a broad framework for their development and implementation. So, the writers focus their work on Elucidating Language Planning and Policy in Multilingual Communities.

## ***Academic Scholarship***

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Scholars use the terms “Language Planning and Policy” and Language Policy and Planning” sometimes interchangeably. In this paper, the writers adopt the same strategy. The writers’ argument is promised on the fact that planning usually precedes policy formulation and a policy also needs planning for effective implementation. Thus,

according to Haugen (1968: 701), Language Planning “includes the normative work of language academics and committees, all forms of what is commonly known as language cultivation and all proposals for language reform or standardization”.

For Fishman (1974:79) the term “language planning” refers to the “organized pursuit of solutions to language problems, typically at the national level”. Weinstein (1980:55) argued that language planning can be defined as a government authorized long term sustained and conscious effort to alter a language itself or to change a language’s functions in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems. “According to Karan (1994:105) language planning is “an activity which attempts to solve a language problem, usually on a national scale, and which focuses on either language form or language use or both”.

In the light of this, this work examined different definitions of language planning and policy in multilingual communities. It also highlights the different aspects of language planning and policy, process of language planning and policy.

It took the discussion of the work further by looking at it’s objectives and goals of language planning and policy. The writers also added the nature of language policy and stages in language planning in their discussion.

### **Definitions of Language Planning and Policy**

Romaine, An American linguist (2003) Opined that language planning and policy is the attempt to manage linguistics and cultural contacts and potential, conflicts resulting from managing or mismanaging multilingualism within the framework of agencies of the modern nation-state.

It has been argued that:

The field of language planning as its name suggests, has concentrated its efforts on the description and practice of planned language development. This is after all its *raison d’être*, to provide future oriented, problem-solving language change strategies to meet a particular language needs. This orientation means that language planning is one of the key descriptive topics in applied linguistics, bringing together as it does theory from a variety of disciplines and putting that into practice (Richard & Bauldorf, 1997:82).

Jernudd and Das Gupta (1971:211) defined language planning as a “political and administrative activity for solving language problems in the society” Gorman (1975:75) defined the term “language planning” as “measures taken to select, codify and in some cases, to elaborate orthographic, grammatical, lexical or semantic features of a language and to disseminates the corpus agreed upon”.

Trughill (2003) sees it as activities carried out by governmental, official or other influential bodies that are aimed at establishing which language varieties are used in a particular community, and subsequently at directing or influencing which language

varieties are to be used for which purposes in that particular community, and what the linguistic characteristics of those varieties are to be.

Cobarrubias (1989) argued that despite the conceptual difference between corpus and status planning, the two interact with each other. The allocation of new language functions (status planning) often requires changes in the linguistic system (corpus planning) such as development of new styles and lexical terms. To exemplify the interaction between corpus and status planning, Deumert (2003) cited the example of the adoption of Hebrew as medium of instruction in Palestine, which necessitates the expansion of vocabulary of classical Hebrew in order to provide terms for the teaching of modern school subjects such as chemistry, physics and biology (Rubin, 1989).

Fishman (1987:409) saw language planning as: “authoritative allocation of a resource to the attainment of language status and language corpus goal, whether in connection with new functions that are aspired to, or in connection with the old functions that need to be discharged more adequately”. “Language Planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes. (Cooper 1989:45)” Reagan (2006:157) opined that language planning is an applied sociolinguistic activity with great potential to function either as a tool for empowerment and liberation or as a means of oppression and domination”, and that each of these functions manifests in every sphere of human life.

An American linguist, Einar Haugen in the late 1950s introduced the term “Language Planning”. It refers to all conscious efforts that aim at changing the linguistic behaviour of a speech community. It can as well include anything “from proposing a new word to a new language” (Haugen, 1987:627) Language Planning is sometimes used interchangeably with language policy. It has been argued that language policy refers “to the more general linguistic, political and social goals underlying the actual language planning process” (Deumert’ 2003:385).

### **Different Aspects of Language Planning and Policy**

1. **Language-in-education:** One of the aspects of language planning and policy is language-in-education. Ingram (1990:53) defined language-in-education as the ideals, goals and content of language policy that can be achieved within the educational system. Liddicoat (2004:155) observed that even though language policy documents do refer to questions of method, few academic studies of language planning and policy have treated method as a specific instance of language-in-education planning. A notable exception is the work of Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:2002) who divide language-in-education policy into a number of areas of focus:

(a) **Access policy:** Policies regarding the designation of languages to be studied and of the levels of education at which language will be studied.

- (b) **Personnel policy:** Policies regarding teacher recruitment, professional learning and standards.
- (c) **Curriculum and community policy:** Policies regarding what will be taught and how the teaching will be organized, including the specification of outcomes and assessment instructions.
- (d) **Methods and materials policy:** Policies regarding prescriptions of methodology and set texts for language study.
- (e) **Resourcing policy:** Policies regards the level of funding to be provided for languages in the education system, and
- (f) **Evaluation policy:** Policies regarding how the impact of language in education policy will be measured and how the effectiveness of policy implementation will be gauged.

So, far, in Nigeria, sections of the National Policy on Education and the 1999 Constitution is the only language policy document in circulation. This means that Nigeria is yet to fashion out a workable language policy.

## 2. Language Choice:

Language choice is another aspect of language planning and policy. What is language choice?

Fitch and Hopper (1983:115-116) observed that:

- (a) Language choice decisions are often emotional to participants in conversations and such choices play a role in group inclusion:
- (b) Language choice is primarily used to include or exclude others, and more often the latter.
- (c) Language choice decisions often evoke strong evaluative and emotional reactions.
- (d) Attitude towards the language choice decision of others often take the form of cultural and linguistic stereo types.

Language choice could be examined both at individuals and societal levels.

### Individual Level of Language Choice

Every individual considers their competence in the various languages in their choice of language. Therefore, there is a conscious effort and decision to choose a language that is very suitable for every occasion and situation, while also taking into consideration the attitude of the addressee or interactant to the language he/she can speak. Adebija (2004) argued that at individual level of “Language Choice” is typically and frequently applied in sociolinguistic literature in multilingual contexts. Scotton (1977), cited in Adebija (2004), observed that multilingual individuals do evaluate communicative situations thereby choosing amongst available codes on the account of intelligibility semantic needs, sociolinguistic norm and other factors.

There exist several studies/researches on the choice of language in certain communicative situations. For example, Fergusson (1959) identified three factors that are crucial determinants of language choice in a multilingual context. These are:

- (a) the social group to which one belongs (education, for instance, affects one's social standing and normally has a remarkable impact on language usage).
- (b) the situation in which one finds oneself while the communication is occurring (language usage at a funeral, for instance, is different from language usage at a birthday party).
- (c) the topic one is discussing (most topics have their distinct registers).

### **The Nature of Language Policy**

Emenanjo (2002) described a policy as a general declaration of intent, for the implementation of a mission statement about a vision for something, about anything, and for everything. A policy may or may not be found in any Corpus Junis, text (s) or document (s). In relation to this perspective, definition of policy, a language policy is about human language, its status, its use and usage and its overall management in any policy. It is a policy about who uses or adopts what language, when, where, why and how, in any policy no matter its ethnic or racial make-up.

Language policy is thus deliberate effort to mandate specific language behaviours in a particular context. Such policies can, and do, involve decision about language development and allocation, language use, language rights, and a host of other important issues. This simply means an official and deliberate allocation of roles of languages in multilingual speech community.

### **Stages in Language Planning**

Bamgbose (1983) referred to stages in language planning as fact finding, policy decision, implementation and evaluation, and he sees this as "the canonical model of language planning", suggesting that it needs to be revised to reflect the reality of language development activities in many developing countries, Where "planning" sometimes takes place without real planning.

Conversely, Adebija (1989) proposes five stages in language planning. First, there is the space-work and preparation stage (during which fact-finding is done and policy formulated). Second, there is a mass mobilization and enlightenment stage, during which the plan is advertised, the citizenry is educated about it and familiarized with it.

Third, there is the implementation stage, which handles the details of the language policy. Fourth, there is the evaluation stage, a continuous process for monitoring the effectiveness problems and prospects of the policy from the perspectives of the set objectives. Finally, there is the review stage, also seen as a continuous process in which changes, informed by findings in the evaluation stage, are effected from time to time as

the situation demands. He identified the following contexts as patients to managers of language resources, the language context, the socio-political context, the psychological context, the administrative governmental context, and the educational context.

It has been argued that, in multilingual environments, at least the following aspects of public life and domains of language use deserve special language planning attention: the national languages, the languages of nations or official languages, the language of intercultural or interethnic communication, the languages of international communication and most importantly the languages of education (Adebija, 2004:187).

In the Nigerian context, the language planning for education has received most attention, perhaps because this domain also affects other domains for which language planning is required. For instance, it impinges on language planning for official language use or nationalism, a role which English has played in Nigeria since colonial times. Attempts have also been made to cultivate Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo into national languages through language planning, but those attempts lag in implementation and have not enhanced the success of the policy. As far as planning for international purposes is concerned, the policy has not overtly stated so, but English has naturally played and still plays this role. Language policy in Nigeria has not also overtly indicated planning, for interethnic communication, but major community languages have served in such a capacity in most states.

Thus, Ufomata (1990:315) has argued that:

*If indeed, linguistic ecology refers to the communicative behaviors of a group, as well as the physical and social contexts in which their communication occurs.. then Nigeria presents a classic example of a complex linguistic ecology. The number of languages spoken within Nigeria is put at between 150 and 427. With such an extremely complex multilingualism, policies needs to be carefully formulated to take into account language attitudes of members of the community. They also need to take cognizance of all the functions, including symbolic ones that various languages perform within that society.*

### **Process of Language Planning and Policy**

Haugen (1966,1989) wrote that the process of language planning consists of four stages: Selection, Codification, Elaboration, Implementation.

**Selection:** Language Planning activities begins with selection, which means preference for a language or its varieties among others and promoting the preferred one. Language policy is a deliberate one to mandate specific language behaviors in particular contexts. Such policies can and do involve decision about language development and allocation, language use, language rights, and a host of other important issues. This simply means allocation of roles and function to languages in a multilingual speech community. For

instance, English has been allocated official functions in Nigeria, since it is used in all government/official transactions inspite of the fact that the country has about 400 languages. Thus, English represents the norm that has been selected and accepted. Wardhaugh (2006:34) pointed out that “the chosen norm inevitably becomes associated with power and the rejected alternatives with lack of power. Not surprisingly, its usually happens that the variety associated with the elite is chosen”.

**Codification:** Codification refers to the standardization process whereby language has been codified to some extent. Thus, the language has been reduced to writing in the form of an accepted orthography/letters of the alphabet, accepted rules for the use of grammar, pronunciation, syntax, dictionaries, primers and a few literatures. This means that, to a large extent, there is an agreement about what is acceptable and what is not in the language. Thus, it brings together competing orthographies, and one is eventually picked as a standard or frame of reference. Again, this represent the norm. A Standardized variety of a language can be used as the identity of the speakers and can also differentiate between the High status and Low status languages.

**Elaboration:** Elaboration of the vocabulary and functions follows the first and second steps. This means going beyond everyday usage to do direct translations, borrow, coin and accommodate new words, expressions and terminologies in that language, especially in the fields of science and technology. It would also involve “the development of pedagogical materials for all levels of formal education” (Wolft, 2000:334).

**Implementation:** The final stage is the implementation of the first three stages in the process. How does this take place: Is it immediate or gradual? This stage will determine to a large extent, how these changes will affect language use in a speech community. For instance, if government creates a lot of awareness by promoting and sponsoring such changes, thereby enhancing the prestige and status and also giving official recognition to this stage, it should be successful.

### **Objectives and Goals of Language Planning and Policy**

Cooper (1989:182) observed: that language planning should serve so many convert goals, is not surprising. Language is the fundamental institution of society, not only because it is the first institution experienced by the individual but also because all other institutions are built upon its regulatory patterns..... to plan language is to plan society. A satisfactory theory of language planning awaits a satisfactory theory of social change (the writer's emphasis).

Namir (1984) earlier suggested specific goals and functions of language planning with sub-categories. The same scholar later identified eleven language planning goals (Nahir,2003).

- (1) **Language purification:** Prescription of usage to preserve the “Linguistic Purity” protects language from foreign influences, and guard against language deviation from within.
- (2) **Language revival:** the attempts to turn a language with few or no surviving native speakers back into a normal means of communications.
- (3) **Language reform:** deliberate change in specific aspects of language, like orthography, spelling, or grammar, in order to facilitate use.
- (4) **Language standardization:** the attempt to garner prestige for a regional language or dialect, transforming it into one that is accepted as the major language, of a region.
- (5) **Language spread:** the attempt to increase the number of speakers of one language at the expense of another.
- (6) **Lexical modernization:** Word creation or adaptation.
- (7) **Terminology unification:** development of unified terminologies, primarily in technical domains.
- (8) **Stylistic simplification:** simplification of language usage in lexicon, grammar and style.
- (9) **Inter-lingual communication:** facilitation of linguistic communication between members of distinct speech communities.
- (10) **Language maintenance:** preservation of the use of a group’s native language as a first or second language where pressures threaten or cause a decline in the status of the language.
- (11) **Auxiliary – code standardization:** Standardization of marginal, auxiliary aspects of language such as signs for the deaf, place names, or rules of transliteration and transcription.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the preliminaries of language planning and policy, starting with the definition of the subject matter. Different aspects of language planning and policy, the nature of language planning and stages in language planning were also highlighted in the work.

The writers also discussed the process of language planning and policy and finally the objectives and goals of language planning and policy.

So, the focus of the writers is on the elucidating language planning and policy in multilingual communities.

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