

Dreams and Realities:

Developing Countries and the English Language

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Paper 2

Challenges for language policy, language and development

by Chris Kennedy

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Challenges for language policy, language and development¹

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What I want to do in this chapter is to explore some of the connections between language policy, language and development and signal a number of challenges that arise from the inter-connections.

Language policy

Language policy (LP) is the deliberate attempt to change an individual's or community's use of a language or languages or a variety or varieties. Communities exist at local, regional, national, international or, increasingly, cross-border (Omoniyi 2004) levels and agents of LP may try to influence the language behaviour of such different groups (or users). LP decision-takers are also found operating at different levels from macro to meso to micro, and they can be groups or individuals acting within local, regional, national and international contexts. The levels, both those pertaining to those creating policy and those affected by policy, are imprecise and not always easily defined; where on the cline you put different language policies can be subjective. Traditionally, LP has been seen as operating at macro-levels; for example, national initiatives by governments. The recognition of other levels, however, is important since we then become aware that LP is carried out not only by governments but also by groups and individuals. Policy initiatives may be targeted not only at national groups but also at group and individual users in regional and local contexts. The levels of policy makers and of users (those affected by policies) indicate the potential complexity of LP and its implementation in development.

The complexity becomes more apparent once you look at the notion of context. A growth metaphor with reference to plants and horticulture helps here. Plants are 'programmed' to grow and they will grow assuming that the conditions match their particular characteristics, though they will also modify themselves and adjust to conditions for which they were not originally suited. Plants' rate of growth and their survival depend on the context, on soil and climate. They are part of an ecological system. The same can be said for humankind in the context of socio-economic development. People wish to improve themselves (it seems a natural

human inclination for people to wish to have better lives, however defined) but their development will be made more or less difficult depending on whether local contexts enable or prevent their wish to develop. One challenge is to implement policy to create a match between people's aspirations and the context in which they live and work, even if that means that the policy may have to change the context in some way. This manipulation of context is something which agents of innovation are well aware of and an integration of innovation studies, development and language policy is well overdue.

Language and development

A useful definition of both language and development is given by Markee (2002:266) who rephrases language as 'communicative competence', and explains development 'as a reduction in participants' vulnerability to things they do not control'. We might wish to add that development implies greater far-reaching participant benefits including an equitable sharing of resources and a distribution of socio-political and economic power and influence.

The field of language and development is complex, with numerous inter-connections and links. This is a further challenge: to recognise complexity and to avoid simplistic solutions to problems, but also to try to manage solutions out of the chaos that lead in some way towards a positive beneficial outcome for participants (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008).

Let me tease out a little of what I mean by language and development. A useful categorisation is provided by Appleby et al. (2002) who distinguish between language **in**, **as**, **for** and **of** development. Language **in** development refers to the role of languages in national socio-economic development and raises questions of the place of English and other languages in contributing to that development; language **as** development refers to the provision of language teaching and language projects where language provision is an end in itself; language **for** development is language used as an essential tool for the development of different domains such as business, science, media and law. (The) language **of** development category is somewhat different from the preceding three since it refers to actual language used, in terms of its lexico-grammatical and discourse properties, whereas the other three refer more to the roles and functions of language. The language **of** development is the discourse which attaches itself to development issues and is used by various stakeholders in development projects. The approach and its aims are closely allied to critical discourse analysis.

These are useful distinctions when talking about language and development since identifying which aspects (**in**, **as**, **for** and **of**) are involved can clarify the issues. At times the distinctions are not clear-cut and there will be occasions when more than one category is applicable, but the categories are especially useful in LP situations where they help to identify the ideology of a particular language policy, whether a policy is explicit in its objectives, or whether there are policy confusions. In cases of governmental, top-down LP, the distinctions (**in**, **as**, **for**) may occur at different levels as the policy is implemented with the language **of** development providing an over-arching discourse. Thus the decision by the Malaysian government

(subsequently reversed) to teach school Maths and Science subjects through the medium of English (Hashim 2009) was a language in development decision (English was regarded as being important in the nation's socio-economic life) while its use in the domains of science and technology was particularly important (language **for** development). These language and development decisions (language in and language for) were then implemented as English language programmes in schools and at that point, as so often in top-down innovations, the resources provided (especially materials and training) proved to be inadequate to enable the ideological ends to be met.

LP, language and development

The example of Malaysia provides a useful way of looking at the different categorisations (in, as, for) with reference to language policy, especially where that policy involves English. There are few countries where governments (correctly or incorrectly) do not espouse the belief that English is essential in socio-economic development and adopt language policies accordingly which either require English as a major subject on the curriculum or indeed have opted for English-medium education (language **as** a tool for development), or require English **for** development in particular domains, though the latter category is often part of language policies adopted by the private sector, especially in business domains. The danger arises where the emphasis on English is misplaced and where other priorities such as poverty alleviation or mother tongue literacy would be more appropriate. This seems to be the view taken by aid development agencies at present. The British and Swedish development aid organisations, for example, have as their overall aims the alleviation of poverty. DfID, the British aid agency, says that its main aims are 'to get rid of extreme poverty' and 'to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)' (DfID 2011; on the MDGs, see Appendix 3 at the end of this volume). SIDA, the Swedish development agency, states that it works 'to reduce poverty in the world' with an overall goal of 'making it possible for poor people to improve their living conditions' (SIDA 2011). Meanwhile, the German aid organisation GIZ (formerly GTZ) has 'sustainable development' as its aim (GIZ 2011).

There are few aid projects that deal directly with language and development. In most cases, language – frequently English – is used in education or agricultural projects, for example, as a means of communication, as a 'service' or 'carrier' language. The days when international aid agencies funded large English language projects as development activities have largely passed. An exception to this general trend is the major nine-year GBP50 million (USD77 million) English language project in Bangladesh. This project, known as 'English in Action' (EIA), is being funded by DfID; according to Seargeant and Erling (2011, Chapter 12 this volume), the project's *prima facie* objective is to develop English language skills 'which will allow for participation in the financial, political and knowledge economies' which are 'conducted at a global level'. Seargeant and Erling, however, fear that this objective is influenced by 'abstract assumptions and received wisdom about the role that English plays in globalised societies' rather than a careful analysis of actual needs. An alternative explanation as to why such a large project was implemented against what appears to be present aid policy is that the decision was driven more by political than linguistic motivations. Since Bangladesh is at present relatively

politically stable – compared, for example, to Pakistan – the British government possibly decided that such a project would help to preserve that stability.

The only other UK-based organisation that appears to be highlighting English language in its projects is the British Council, which uses English as one of its carriers of cultural relations. Otherwise, the general lack of enthusiasm for English language aid projects is understandable given a shortage of financial aid resources, the emphasis on the alleviation of poverty, the fact that governments themselves are responding to their own educational and English language needs and the widespread availability of private sector provision for English language (although arguably private sector provision benefits only the relatively well-off). (Kennedy 2010).

This cautious attitude towards English language in development aid projects is supported by academic researchers. Tupas (2009) thinks, for example, that LP is a form of social development planning and that rather than immediately defining language problems that need solving through LP, we should look at local social needs first and only then see where language policy might or might not assist in achieving social objectives. A similar case is made by Djité (2008) who, while not denying the importance of language in development, is clear that we must first identify what the needs and wants of local communities are in, for example, the domains of health and education. Only then should we examine whether language should play a role in answering those needs; we should not assume that the language chosen should be English as other languages may well be a more appropriate and relevant choice.

LP and applied linguists

This brings us to the division between those who take LP decisions (practitioners) and those who advise or comment on those decisions (often applied linguists). Politicians and planners do not pay much attention to applied linguists working in the LP field. Kaplan and Baldauf (2007) believe applied linguists do not have the same impact on language policy practice as, for example, medical advisers have on health policy. They over-rate the influence of advisers in other fields but they make a valid point. There are many reasons for this lack of influence. They believe that health issues are more tangible, results more visible and returns more immediate. This is the case where more mechanistic solutions to problems can be successful and measured (for example, in the case of inoculation) though there will also be other public health issues, where solutions are not as simple, which may be nearer to the sort of problems arising from language policy, especially those areas that, like language, intersect with attitudes and beliefs and behavioural change; for example, smoking and diet campaigns.

There is also the problem (in this context) that language is used by all and we are all competent (or believe we are competent) in language use. Advice therefore may not be welcome if users are not aware of language issues. Srikant Sarangi (Sarangi 2009) met resistance advising doctors on doctor–patient communications. The doctors denied communication problems and said they knew what they were doing. Sarangi explained to the doctors that if he cut himself he would see blood but he

would need doctors to tell him the composition of the blood and explain to him the process of clotting and healing. The study of language, he explained, was somewhat similar: an apparently simple surface phenomenon requires expertise for deeper analysis.

That language is not regarded as important as, for example, health is shown by the fact that I know of no Ministry of Language though governments generally have a Ministry of Health. Organisations do exist that advise governments and advocate policy on language. I am thinking particularly of national language academies, often attached to Ministries; for example, the Académie française, the Pusat Bahasa in Indonesia and in Malaysia and the Icelandic Language Institute (Hilmarsson-Dunn 2006). However, these organisations have a restricted role in that they advise on corpus issues (generally of a lexical nature), not those related to status planning, and are concerned with linguistic cultivation and purification. The general (unsuccessful) track record of language academies also indicates the potential problems of centralised control over language. It is better to regard language as part of culture belonging to other domains, especially the domain of education, where language may still play a major role in development without however being allocated a specific 'Ministry of Language'.

Applied linguists should be prepared to engage with language and development problems but also be aware of the attitudes that underlie them. We need theories that can be applied to social problems to produce evidence-based research but we also need to be able to communicate research findings to users in intelligible ways without either alienating or confusing them. We need in particular, according to Kaplan and Baldauf (2007), to realise that LP is essentially a political process so that we can find ways of engaging with the politicians rather than commenting from the sidelines. Applied linguists have to accept that other issues may assume an importance politically (for example, the provision of fresh water or food supplies) and that language might at best be a component of aid projects (language for development) rather than be part of separate language projects (language as development).

Language policy and social development

As we have seen, Tupas (2009) believes that LP is a part of social development and that we should look at the social needs of communities and only then see whether there is a role for language in helping to satisfy those needs. It is useful then to have access to a model of social development against which we could measure the appropriacy of LP interventions.

Table 1 shows three stages or classifications of society: (A) Traditional, (B) Contemporary and (C) Emergent. The terms I have used are not crucial. The important thing is to understand the idea of three stages of social development over time, corresponding very roughly to the first half of the 20th century (A), the latter half of the 20th century (B) and the beginning of the 21st century (C). The concept of a tripartite division and the categories within it are selected and adapted from Kalantzis and Cope (2008).

<i>Table 1: Three stages of social development</i>		
(A) Traditional	(B) Contemporary	(C) Emergent
rationalist economics	behavioural economics	knowledge society
rational	romantic	criticality
highly structured	neo-liberalism	distributed knowledge
top down	soft power	collaboration
centralisation	decentralisation	micro-agency
nationism/nationalism	globalisation	diversity
state power	localisation	public/private partnership
predictability	uncertainty	fuzziness/complexity
mass production 'Fordism'	choice/market-driven	mobility/flexibility
stratified society	less stratified society	multiple identities
collectivist cultures	individualism	participation

I do not have room here to gloss the categories in each of the three stages but I hope they are self-explanatory. From an historical viewpoint, the social development expressed from left to right of the table (i.e. from Stage A to B to C) is one from simplicity to complexity; from mono- to multi-dimensions; from structure to fluidity; from macro to micro.

We can illustrate such changes in society by looking at their everyday realisations. Thus working spaces have moved from the concept of individual offices (Stage A of the table) to open plan (Stage B) to spaces with multiple and changing purposes (Stage C). Readers may have experienced such space changes also in education, with children at one school sitting in rows at desks attached to the floor; another school might have children working in groups around moveable tables; another might not have classrooms at all as we know them but modular spaces that change according to the needs of the children. These differences in use of space reflect the three stages of social development (A, B and C): they are indicative of the way a society thinks about education, which, in turn, is related to social development.

As a further example, architectural styles can illustrate social changes more dramatically. The Willis (formerly the Sears Building) in Chicago, built in 1973, reflects a 'Traditional' style, the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur are an example of 'Contemporary' style, while the proposed Dubai Opera House illustrates 'Emergent' design.² The Dubai building shows a design fluidity in marked contrast to the angular and structured lines of the Chicago building, and the individualistic ornamental spires of the Petronas Towers. Such visual symbols demonstrate how social developments permeate all areas of our lives and can indicate a stage or stages of a society's development. I am arguing that language planners and development agents must be aware of these stages if they are to design appropriate language and development interventions which will be successfully implemented.

Classifying societies in this way is crude in that a particular society will not be totally at one stage or another since different domains within societies may

be at different stages. The categories represent generalisations and there will be hybridity (Pennycook 2007) and considerable seepage between them. Nor will there necessarily be linear development since economic or political crises may cause a society or domains within it to move from one classification to another. We should also be aware of the dangers of imposing a top-down a priori classification on a society (with dangers of stereotyping) and allowing this to determine development policy. It is better to work bottom-up, analysing a situation and arriving at the categories after local post hoc investigation of processes and practices (Holliday 2005). I am not suggesting that one classification (whether A, B or C) is necessarily better than another, but something like Table 1 could be a useful device when planning language policies that fit development needs. You could describe a society and either match policies to categories, or decide that a policy will assist in moving a domain from one category to another, or be forewarned of mismatches between an existing social stage and future development plans.

Table 2: Three types of education system (terms and categories from Kalantzis and Cope 2008)

Didactic	Authentic	Transformative
structural approaches	communicative approaches	task-based approaches
skills for the many, education for the few	transferable skills	variety of learning
Institutions	institutions/off-site	new technologies
teacher control	learner autonomy	collaborative learners
Transmission	interpretation	enquiry
book culture	book plus IT	greater variety of media
knowing that	knowing how	knowing why
defined role for teachers	greater teacher roles	teachers as educators, catalysts, agents
uniform learners	individuality	learner differences

We can see the implications for the domain of education and development. Table 2 illustrates the different stages of education deriving from the tripartite social classification in Table 1. Problems arise when policy initiatives, whether guided by local governments or development agencies, are designed to change an education system from, for example, a Didactic to a Transformative stage (Honna and Takeshita 2005). This is not to say that attempts should not be made to move an education system or part of it from one stage to another, but development agents should be made fully aware of what they are attempting to do and should justify their decision, since an existing system may already be achieving good results; alternatively, improvements could be added to the system without creating an entirely different one. Care should be taken not to attempt too extreme a shift from one system to another, nor too rapid a shift, as otherwise the development may fail. We need adaptive rather than mechanistic language and development policies (Swanson and Bhadwal 2009) that make changes while taking into account the local context.

Changes in LP

We can see also use the classifications in Table 1 – (A) Traditional, (B) Contemporary, (C) Emergent – to look at developments in language policy and planning that have impacted on development issues.

There have been criticisms of the 1970s view of LP (for example, Ricento 2006a). LP at that time reflected the socio-political conditions of the period and was concerned with top-down centralised policies and a rationalist technocratic view of planning, especially in connection with the problems of newly independent states in a post-colonial period. LP at the time was reflecting characteristics of the ‘Traditional’ classification in Table 1.

These criticisms are to some extent true (any activity will be influenced by the dominant ideologies of the time) but it must be said that the criticism should be levelled more at the actual political practice of LP, which was and still is in many situations top-down, with little reference to the language ecologies and contextual realities surrounding the political processes and the decisions taken (Samuelson and Freedman 2010).

Those who were actually writing about LP at the time were closer to current concerns in LP than some present-day writers admit, although the location of their case studies naturally reflected a post-colonial world of newly-independent states. If we take one of the series of seminal publications that was produced in the late 1960s and 1970s and compare a number of the issues raised at the time with current preoccupations it is clear that there are similarities. *Can Language be Planned?* (Rubin and Jernudd 1971), a collection of papers resulting from a seminar in Hawaii in 1968-69, tackles a number of concerns which pre-date those current today. The question ‘Can language be planned?’ is not answered with a triumphant yes, but with a degree of circumspection and hedging. The papers in the collection represent a number of different disciplines and attempt to look at LP from a multi-disciplinary point of view; the limitations of LP are explicitly mentioned. The notion of levels of language planning and concerns for what would now be called micro-planning (see below) are described. LP is regarded very much as part of a socio-economic political context.

It is true that there was a period during the 1980s and early 1990s when LP fell out of the academic mainstream (although clearly it continued as a political process). Quite why that occurred is a complex issue partly to do with attitude changes towards concepts of social planning and partly because of political changes in funding (for example, the Ford Foundation – which had earlier supported several LP surveys – lost interest and withdrew its support). What we are witnessing today is evidence of a cycle or spiral of change which has renewed interest in LP but which now reflects the concerns of a view of social development described in columns B and C of Table 1.

Present and future of LP and development

LP as a discipline is no different from other disciplines such as social planning, economics and linguistics itself, all of which have changed through the late 20th

and early 21st centuries as the cultures from which they are derived have changed (reflected in a move from column A to columns B and C in Table 1).

The earlier LP case studies and investigations built up a descriptive database from which we were able to produce models of language planning based on the questions of ‘what actors attempt to influence what behaviours of which people for what ends under what conditions by what means through which decision-making processes with what effect?’ (Cooper 1989:98). Now, although descriptive studies continue to be made, there is a much broader concern for a deeper more critical interpretation of the processes of LP and for looking at it from several viewpoints. Such a variety of approaches can be found in Ricento (2006b), a collection which has contributions reflecting political, economic and cultural viewpoints (a broader aspect which was apparent as early as the 1970s), methodologies ranging from historical investigation to linguistics (via ethnography and psycho-sociology) and topics ranging from identity to human rights and linguistic imperialism.

The challenge given these different approaches is to create a unifying theory. However, given that LP is a part of social and development planning, it is unlikely that this will be achieved. Any such unifying theory would be unable to distil the complexity in any form other than the most simplistic. We are better to remain looking at LP and development from a number of angles and drawing conclusions from them, what has been called a process of ‘imagination’ (Morgan 2006), using metaphors to look at processes from several viewpoints in order to produce rich descriptions of them.

We can situate present LP (or at least academic commentaries on its practice) in an ‘Emergent’ paradigm (see Table 1) which includes critical LP. Just as linguistics, politics and sociology have developed ‘critical’ schools of thought where the criticality refers to an ideology of social change and of exposing deep structural inequalities beneath surface processes, so LP has developed a critical aspect. This began with Tollefson’s criticism of what he calls the neoclassical approach and his suggestion to replace such an approach with the historical-structural approach, placing politics at the centre of the LP enterprise and regarding LP as a process of different levels from macro to micro, from governmental levels to – for example – classrooms (Tollefson 1991).

Macro and micro issues in LP and development

The macro-micro distinction is one which has been gaining more ground recently (e.g. Omoniyi 2007) and it has several interpretations. There is also a meso level but I shall not go into detail here; establishing a meso-level is somewhat subjective but it lies between the macro (supranational or national) and the micro (individual, group or institution).

One example of the macro-micro distinction is that which looks at levels of educational policy and implementation from government to classroom and how agents at the different levels implement the policy which is handed down to them. This approach describes micro implementation of a macro policy and is concerned with linkages between the levels and issues such as decentralisation and centralisation (Kennedy 2001).

A second view takes a more overtly political stance and is influenced by Foucault's notion of governmentality (Foucault 1991). This approach examines the actions and strategies of agents of planning and development – whether politicians, advisers or educators – and in particular the discourses they adopt to implement micro aspects of macro-policy. It deconstructs their actions by examining their language. We need to examine not so much laws and regulations but how people behave in certain situations and talk about issues (Curdt-Christiansen 2009). This approach has much in common therefore with the category of the language of development described above.

Linked to these concerns of the micro is the question of agency. The switch from the macro to the micro has brought an already existing concern with agents into an LP and development focus. I say 'already existing' since in educational development there has always been considerable interest in learners and teachers and their role in the curriculum, though their language and how they express their views has not until now been a major concern. Within an 'Emergent' LP framework, however, we are now more interested in how these agents at micro levels implement a policy but especially how they use language while implementing.

The third element of micro-policy is the concern with individuals, groups or institutions who create their own LP without being directly linked to a macro-policy handed down to them for implementation. An institution might in fact produce local counter-language policies from those proposed at macro (e.g. national) levels. It is an interesting question to what extent any institution or group while developing a micro-policy is linked in some way to macro-policy, since the group is part of a society and is therefore not operating in a socio-cultural vacuum. This is one way an agenda of development issues can be pursued by micro-agencies pushing upward towards the macro and presenting counter-policies.

One example of an LP and development micro-policy implemented in accord with a larger government macro-policy is the decision by AKTEL (a major Bangladeshi telecommunications company, now rebranded ROBI) and the Daily Star (a national newspaper chain) to provide free newspapers regularly to Bangladeshi schools. These newspapers contain specially-written sections on English language to improve students' linguistic and reading skills (Daily Star 2009). A critical language policy and development approach would want to discuss the motives of a telecommunications company and a national newspaper in collaborating on such a development project but here I shall just provide it as an example of micro-planning.

A further instance, also from Bangladesh though not as directly concerned with language, is an example of micro-development related to social, economic and political planning. It is the establishment of the Grameen Bank (www.grameen-info.org/) founded by Professor Muhammad Junus. This is a bank that supports rural development by giving small loans to the poor without demanding financial guarantees. It is not without its critics and has now grown into a number of inter-related businesses, but it started by recognising the needs and wants of poor people in a local context and devising simple appropriate solutions to their problems, bypassing the traditional macro-processes of banking. The micro-credit

scheme in many ways is a return to the notion of appropriate technology espoused many years ago by Schumacher (Schumacher 1973), who formulated his seminal ideas in a 'Traditional' society but which now seem as relevant in 'Emergent' times (to use the terms in Table 1).

The macro-micro distinction has also been discussed by Spolsky (2009) who suggests we should consider a new term to describe LP activities, namely language management. This re-definition of LP may be part of a need to fit LP more clearly into a neo-liberal approach where ideas are marketed and branded and newness is regarded as important, though I suspect those proposing such a new term would object to the idea of language management being part of a neo-liberal discourse. Spolsky (2009) regards LP as consisting of three inter-related aspects: practices, beliefs and management. In his description, LP is the superordinate term but it is more appropriate, if we wish to adopt the term at all, to regard language management as the superordinate from which language policy and practice derive. Considering LP as a form of language management might have the effect of bringing LP and development management closer together.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I said that I would describe some of the inter-relationships between LP, language and development and indicate the challenges that face those of us working in these areas.

Here is a summary of some of those challenges arising from the discussion. The challenges are to:

- understand the complexity of LP and development issues and find ways of managing the complexity
- use, but with circumspection, social models of development to evaluate the appropriacy and relevance of LP and development plans
- realise that local context and local issues are crucial to LP and development
- accept development priorities (such as health and education) and realise that language may play a subsidiary role in such projects
- promote language in, as and for development only when there is a clear language need assessed at local levels
- consider the appropriate and relevant roles of all languages in development, not solely English
- examine LP and development problems from a multi-disciplinary and critical perspective and try to combine macro and micro approaches
- examine the role of agents in LP and development
- engage with political practitioners in LP and development and present research that is accessible and relevant to them.

Notes

1. This is a revised version of a plenary paper presented at the eighth Language and Development Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 23-25 June 2009.
2. Further details of the three buildings discussed are as follows: The 1973 Willis Tower (Sears Building), Chicago, can be seen at www.chicagoarchitecture.info/Building/375/The-Willis-Tower.php. The architect was Bruce Graham from Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and the structural engineer was Fazlur Khan. The 1998 Petronas Towers, Kuala Lumpur, can be seen at www.fotolibra.com/gallery/339356/klcc-petronas-twin-tower-malaysia/. The architects were César Pelli and Djay Cerico. The futuristic design of the proposed Dubai Opera House and Cultural Centre can be seen at www.designboom.com/weblog/cat/9/view/3045/dubai-opera-house-by-zaha-hadid.html. The architects are Zaha Hadid and Patrik Schumacher.

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