

Bernard Spolsky. *Language management*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. (xi, 308)

This remarkable text begins with the declaration, “Language policy is all about choices” (1). The goal of a theory of language policy is “to account for the choices made by individual speakers on the basis of rule-governed patterns” that are recognized in the speech communities in which they participate (*ibid.*). While the greater body of literature in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis delineates factors that influence those choices, this book is directed to the role played by management, i.e., “conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control the choices” (*ibid.*). Language management involves language practices, beliefs about language, and policy (4 – 6). Developed here is a model that accounts for pressures and influences internal and external to speech communities at various levels. This model recognizes spheres of management that include home and family (Ch 2), religion (Ch 3), workplace and business (Ch 4), public spaces (Ch 5), schools (Ch 6), legal and health professions (Ch 7), military organizations Ch 8), government at various levels (Ch 9), language activism (Ch 10), and multinational bodies (Ch 11), and agencies and academics (Ch 12). This text is greatly enhanced by the many examples drawn from a wide range of environments that illuminate the principles that frame the model.

While we often look to the activities of a central authority, this model recognizes that language management (like charity) begins in the home. Family language practices are the atom of community language management. A bilingual family offers a choice that a monolingual family does not. These choices are influenced by perceptions of language problems on the part of individual speakers and their efforts at self correction and censorship (11). A long sample from a military veteran is provided, which documents his efforts to remove excess sauce from his speech to make it more palatable in his new environment (12).

Parents seek to control the language of children to prevent, for example, their using profanity (14), but also with an eye toward utilitarian objectives. In the case of bilingual families, this begins with a selection of what language(s) to speak to infants and toddlers. These choices result from the beliefs of the parents, i.e., the in situ language managers (17). It should be pointed out that during the period in Indonesia when speaking Chinese was *verboten*, the primary effective authority in enforcing state-sanctioned language practices was the family. Family directed language management competes with that engendered by peers, however (19).

The theme that language management results from the perception of language problems is also prominent in the sphere of business and the workplace. At a fundamental level this is observed in the practices of sellers who use the language of their customers when undertaking trade, and business proprietors are often so motivated in their hiring selections (54). Examples cited of offices hiring bilingual clerks and a university department replacing a bilingual student assistant with another show that much of effective language management is likely to be local (55).

Public signage constitutes a fascinating sphere of language management activities, as each instantiation reflects a language choice. A review of results of studies cited indicate that a complex of factors influence language choices on the part of business owners and agencies on signs – community affinity, instrumental accommodation of customers, even inertia, keeping a sign that came with the property (70 – 71). The public language spaces also include telephone calls into and out of the business or agency, where language choices are vital (84 – 85). We could add to this the question of product packaging design and the linguistic choices involved in plurilingual societies such as in South Asia and South Africa.

The role of schooling in a theory of language management is summed up succinctly: “schools are there basically to manage the language of the students,” as it is recognized that from the moment they arrive at school, students’ language practices are managed as to the choice of language and variety, and style, according to the ideologies and preferences of the school management and teachers (114). This involves both the language of instruction and languages in the curriculum. In the United States, the standard variety of English is stressed, although not without debate, for both English learners and dialect speakers (102). In South Africa, although nine other languages are officially recognized alongside English and Afrikaans, the two major languages dominate the landscape (103). Heritage and language restoration movements are also involved with school choices, as in the case of school personnel in Israel encouraging the use of Hebrew at home (114).

The domains of public safety, law, and health, are fraught with perils in language selection and management. The Language Line in San Diego, California, was staffed with bilingual volunteers who helped police respond to participants from Southeast Asia (115 – 16), which amplifies the problem of a plurilingual population of participants interacting with mainly monolingual police officers in often highly charged and potential emergency situations. Courts of law must accommodate speakers of a variety of languages, often requiring the services of qualified interpreters, which often introduces new perils. This is further complicated by the legal requirement in many jurisdictions to record the transactions (116 – 17).

In the domain of health services, the problem of language choice involves diagnosis and communication about treatment options, along with the availability of information material about health issues. A commercial telephone service in the United States offers support 24 hours a day, every day of the year, in 150 languages (127). This type of language support comes with a cost.

Denver Health reported it spent more than \$1 million in December, 2005, to provide interpretation services in 160 languages. It appears that health care and health management increasingly involve language management in plurilingual societies.

Ch 8, “Managing Military Language,” provides an excellent review of numerous examples that demonstrate the breadth of language management issues that face a military force. Bilingualism in the Roman army officer class is thought to be a major factor in the army becoming such a potent force in its time (130 – 31). In contrast the French Foreign Legion depended on recruits eventually acquiring enough French to receive orders (ibid.). In the modern era of multinational alliances and cooperative engagement, language management takes on new proportions.

While it remains the case that any government effort at language management requires the active support of local participants and local resources for implementation, governments at various levels exert significant authority in language management. A virtue of this approach, which examines language management in various domains, permits us to distinguish internal from superior level domains and the pressures they exert on language policy (145). It is recognized that governments may delegate authority to specific participants, as under the Ottoman millet system and the British Mandate of Palestine (146), confer language status, as in the Māori Language Act (148), and/or cultivate a favored language or variety, through the agency of various reforms, modernization programs, and academies (147).

The emergence of national varieties has been a fruitful field for cultivation and the promulgation of language policies; France offers an excellent example of organized centralization (153). In India, in the *Sprachbund* that is South Asia, three impulses influenced

national policy: the importance of indigenous languages, the value of education in mother tongue, and the need for a national language (157).

A curiosity emerges in that except for in certain totalitarian states, very few regulatory bodies have exercised actual authority over language choice. These are the “marked cases.” More commonly, language policy arises “by consensual language practices and beliefs” (234). It is often the case that the territorial solution dominates (154), and emerges as a solution for multilingual nation-states (173). But as appealing as regional autonomy in language management appears, the approach is not without perils, as the case of Yugoslavia demonstrates; territorial division is more often based on political, ethnic, or religious factors, which language tends to follow as a reflex (165), and more often it produces, rather than solves, language diversity (256) therefore.

The role of activism in language management during the last century, especially in instances of language preservation and restoration, has been potent. In Chapter 10, “Influencing Language Management: Language Activist Groups,” activism in the case of Hebrew in Israel is surveyed in detail, along with Gaelic in Ireland, Māori in New Zealand, and numerous examples in other countries. Typically three classes of participants appear: activists, who would manage language if they had authority, speakers of the target language who activists seek to persuade, and the established authority the activists seek to influence (185).

The role of activists is closely associated with concepts termed “language rights,” in many instances seen as civil or human rights (217). These rights are in many cases seen as individual in nature, e.g., the right to use, learn, or teach the language of one’s choice, and in other instances as collective rights inhering in a group of speakers. Language activists, as

representative of groups and ideologies that support given language policies, are significant factors in language management (204).

It is pointed out that supranational organizations that advocate for human and language rights can recommend policies which they will not be called upon to implement, and whose practical consequences they will not be called upon to face (224). A cost benefits perspective can be gained from the experience of the European Union, which in 1999 expended £325 million, nearly one third of its internal budget, on interpreting and translation services to accommodate its multilingual assembly (211).

The model of language management developed in this work is approached domain by domain, identifying participants and their practices and beliefs, and the policies they apply. Accounting for languages choices made by individuals, the goal of the theory of language policy mentioned earlier, is achieved by applying the practices, beliefs, and policies of language management participants in the many examples discussed. The approach is successful, and the text that results is high informative and engaging, and contributes much to our understanding of the field.

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