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PRESERVING LANGUAGES BEYOND THE POLITICAL DIMENSION: SOME PROPOSALS FOR A DIALECT PLANNING

Summary. In the last few years a growing attention on the preservation of languages has developed, thanks to initiatives of *language planning*, which imply inter alia the recognition of an idiom as a language at the political level. This view follows the dichotomy between those idioms that are official languages of institutions and those which do not have such status, i.e. dialects. However, the difference between languages and dialects being socio-linguistic and not linguistic *tout court*, the efforts for preserving languages should not take the official status as a reference point. In addition, since it is very unlikely to give the same official status to a large number of languages, a different solution should be envisaged for non-official languages. Thus, they could be preserved through initiatives that can be named as *dialect planning*, the main purpose of which is not spreading a language in all domains but its preservation. *Dialect planning* is analysed in this study considering its five steps: (1) *corpus planning* that entails, first of all, language documentation; (2) *status planning* that implies some protections without entailing the recognition of the status of official language in the light of the linguistic rights; (3) *prestige planning* that counterbalances the 'weaker' status of dialects with respect to languages, by instilling in speakers the awareness that idioms are fundamental parts of cultures; (4) *acquisition planning* that identifies the strategies carried out for teaching a language; and (5) *family language planning* aimed at strengthening the family language transmission.

Keywords: dialect planning, language planning, language policy, language rights, Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Così ci parlano del gran danno che sia il i nostri figliuoli quasi bilingui, lasciando loro cioè il dialetto materno e costringendoli a studiare, al modo che si fa d'un idioma estraneo, la lingua che si dice nostra, con tanto spreco, aggiungono, delle loro intelligenze, e in tanto bisogno di far tesoro di ogni più piccol briciolo delle facoltà mentali della nazione; come se la scienza e l'esperienza non dimostrassero in cento maniere, che è anzi una condizione privilegiata, nell'ordine dell'intelligenza, questa dei figliuoli bilingui, [...]

Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1873: xxviii)

Introduction¹

The aforementioned quotation belongs to a journal dating back to 1873, twelve years after the unification of Italy, a period when the new-born Italian state was organizing itself by taking inspiration from the French model, a model based on the motto 'one nation, one state, one language'. It was a model in which there is room for just one language: the language of the state.

Over time such an idea has been spread into society through three main instruments: the army, the media and schools (Hagège, 2002, p. 98), that have succeeded in reducing the number of speakers of many languages. However, some recent trends in linguistics, by focusing on the importance of multilingualism, have supported the maintenance or revitalization of various languages through language planning. Such attempts imply a recognition of an idiom as a language at the political level. But is such a precondition always necessary? Should we think that a language can be safeguarded only if it has a political value? By dealing with those idioms that are not given an official recognition, i.e. dialects, by taking language planning as a model and by reconsidering it in the light of the (sociolinguistic) difference between languages and dialects, in the current study I point out some proposals for a dialect planning.

Language Planning

Language planning, the goal of which is to facilitate the linguistic life of the speakers (see e.g. Dell'Aquila and Iannàccaro, 2011, p. 11), traditionally regards above all those languages that are related with an official status, that is to say, are to become the language of a political institution. Language planning is composed of three main levels (ibid., p. 23f.).

1. Corpus planning, i.e. the work done on the alphabet, orthography, phonetics, morphology, syntax and vocabulary with the aim to make a language become the language of administration, school and high culture (ibid., p. 59).
2. Status planning, i.e. the regulatory and legislative apparatus that supports the language, and all those operations at the social level aiming at increasing or consolidating the prestige of a language, especially at the educational and administrative level (ibid., p. 97).
3. Acquisition planning (interrelated with the previous ones), i.e. the set of public interventions aiming at increasing the number of the potential speakers of a language (ibid., p. 133).

Language planning is neither a new nor a uniform phenomenon; it has a long history and has changed according to the different contexts and, according to Jernudd and Nekvapil (2012, pp. 18–27), it can be divided into historical types: Premodern, Early Modern, Modern and Postmodern. A famous example of premodern language planning is the Académie française founded in 1635, which was the period when vernacular languages were occupying the domains traditionally belonging to Latin, with the aim to render languages pure and worth to be used also in the fields of art and sciences. The Early Modern language planning includes both the European

¹ I thank Davide Astori for his valuable remarks and suggestions.

national movements of the 19th century, characterized by the interrelation between political events and culture (especially language), and Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s²: it implied interventions on orthography, modernization of the vocabulary, publication of primers and textbooks. The Modern language planning is represented by Prague Linguistic School, whose attention focused on details, leading in this way to the standardization of a language, and as a consequence, to neglecting variation.

The late 1960s saw the birth of the 'classic language planning' with outstanding scholars such as Joshua Fishman, Einar Haugen, Uriel Weinreich and Charles Ferguson, who conducted research in particular on language problems in developing nations, language maintenance, language shift and language ecology. As maintained by Jernudd:

The classic language planning model is based on the premise that language planning takes place at the level of the nation-state and the plans project onto the development of the entire society. Political processes of the state (or government) determine the goals to be achieved. The optimistic belief which dominated the international group of theoreticians of language planning in the 1960s is commented on in retrospect by one of the participants thus: 'we recognized and accepted the realities of political processes and central state power; and we believed in the good of state action, that government could act efficiently and satisfactorily' (Jernudd, 1997a, p. 132).

Starting from the 1980s, a critique to 'classical language planning' was developed (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012, pp. 27–30), parallel to the critique to the traditional states, in relation to the failure of both governance and social and economic progress. As a consequence, an increasing attention was paid to language minorities and indigenous cultures that until then had been disregarded by the classic language planning, aimed at strengthening the hegemonic view of reality. This new approach led to the so-called 'postmodern language planning'. That "reflects this most recent period in Western society behaviour towards language and it rests on recognition and support of variation in society and protects and maintains plurality" (ibid.).

Languages and Dialects

Nowadays it is widely acknowledged among linguists that the difference between languages and dialects is not linguistic but just sociolinguistic, since any dialect, like any other language, can express any concept having the same potentialities. Certain idioms are perceived by the speakers to be more powerful and so they are called 'languages', certain other idioms are perceived to be less powerful and are called 'dialects'. Thus, at the basis of this distinction there are political, economic, and more in general social factors.

In particular, I would underline the political ones. In fact, contemporary society is deeply influenced by the idea that linguistic uniformity is fundamental for the existence of the nation-state, and that, as a consequence, all languages different

2 Even though resembling partially the Premodern and Modern types.

from the official language of the state can represent a danger for the state itself that has traditionally used language policy as a means of legitimation³. Such policies have instilled in most speakers the idea that national languages are naturally more important than the other languages (both minority languages and dialects), as already pointed out by Kloss, who took as an example the speakers of Occitan, Low Saxon, Sardinian and Creole that perceived their languages as “dialects of the victorious tongues rather than in terms of autonomous systems” (1967, p. 36).

Nowadays, the support of linguistic diversity as a public good is based on aesthetic, intellectual, cultural and scientific reasons⁴, while *on the other hand, linguistic convergence is still fostered by resorting to considerations regarding national solidarity, democratic engagement and civil society* (Réaume & Pinto, 2012, p. 40f.). However, such objections are easily rejectable. As far as the topic of national solidarity is concerned (Réaume & Pinto, 2012, p. 42), it is not clear “whether a common language is crucial to this pursuit”, and not even “that a national language must prevail in all the spheres of political, economic and social life to contribute to solidarity”. As further claimed by Réaume & Pinto, “the democratic argument is liable to the objection that it assumes a highly idealistic level of engagement by the citizenry that may not match reality” and “the argument for a common language is further bolstered by pointing out the possible consequences of multilingualism for equal opportunity” (ibid. 43). In addition, the use of a common language in the fields of employment and education leads to a marginalization of minority languages, so that “the equal opportunity argument is supplemental at best” (ibid. 44).

Being regarded as dialects, endangered languages⁵ show the typical symptoms leading to language death, i.e. fewer speakers, fewer domains of use, and structural simplification (Dorian, quoted by Sallabank, 2012, p. 101). These symptoms are due to the four main causes of language endangerment: 1. natural catastrophes, famine, disease; 2. war and genocide; 3. overt repression; 4. a dominance that can be economic, cultural, political, historical or attitudinal (Sallabank, 2012, pp. 103–4). This last point concerns in particular the case of Europe where the national languages have imposed themselves on people at the expense of the dialects through a top-down process.

Also in the light of these remarks, the successful policies for linguistic diversity need (Sallabank, 2012, p. 123):

1. ‘prior ideological clarification’;
2. feasible, attainable goals;
3. understanding of local contexts and linguistic ecologies;
4. taking into account sociolinguistic, economic, cultural and political factors, including gender issues;
5. support at all the levels (addressing attitudes and ideologies);
6. a ‘bottom-up’ approach which empowers local communities;
7. practical measures to support speakers’ use of endangered languages.

3 Summarized by the motto *lingua instrumentum regni* (Dell’Aquila & Iannàccaro, 2011, p. 31).

4 Also the respect of linguistic rights should be added.

5 Referring e.g. to dialects in Italy, see UNESCO 2003.

Overview

Dialect Planning

'Dialect planning' follows the critique of classic language planning and fits in the present global context, where language planning is influenced by three main factors: globalization, migration and regionalization of governance (*Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012, p. 36*). Within the global framework of the global political changes and according to the well-established awareness among scholars that there are no substantial differences between languages and dialects at the linguistic level, we face the growing attention, on the one hand, to cultural aspects, on the other hand, to the weakening of the traditional nation-state. The expression 'dialect planning' signifies a particular kind of language planning that is aimed at the preservation of those languages that are considered as dialects. It is conceived mainly as a 'dialect preserving': like language planning, it aims at facilitating the linguistic life of speakers, but unlike language planning, it does not imply the recognition of a dialect as a language of an institution.

The aims of dialect planning are language maintenance or reversing language shift, depending on different situations, and it consists of five steps: the documentation of a dialect (corpus planning), the juridical safeguarding in the light of the language rights (status planning), the promotion of activities aimed at spreading the cultural importance (prestige planning), the way to teach it (acquisition planning), and the transmission inside family (family language planning).

Corpus Planning

Planning of a dialectal corpus should be articulated in three steps: 1) to collect all the sources⁶; 2) to conduct scientific studies on the language; 3) to make the full corpus available⁷. Collection of the sources regards both published and unpublished materials. The first case concerns not just literary works but all the materials preserved in a dialect, and linguistic studies about grammar and vocabulary⁸; the second case resembles very closely those activities related to endangered languages called 'language documentation', i.e. the "creation, annotation, preservation and dissemination of transparent records of a language" (Woodbury, 2011, p. 159). An operation that should be taken into account: "what the community (and the linguist) want", "what the linguist and community are capable of doing", and "what is feasible given the time and money available" (Bowern, 2011, p. 459).

According to Conathan (2011, p. 236), the core archival functions are: appraisal, accession, arrangement, description, preservation, access and use. Archives are composed of records, collections and fonds. A record can be defined as: "data or information that has been fixed on some medium; that has content, context and structure; and that is used as an extension of human memory or to demonstrate accountability" (Pearce-Moses, 2005). In the case of endangered language documentation, such records include, firstly, material, regardless of medium (e.g. audiovisual

6 Oral and written, video and audio, and, more recently, digital.

7 For the proposal of carrying out a dialectal corpus see also Bernini (2013b, p. 96).

8 In case there is no common orthography, it implies also the graphization.

recordings, notes or photographs), that documents some aspects of the target language and, secondly, any derivative or analytical material (e.g. transcriptions, drafts of analysis, slip files, databases, dictionaries) that contextualizes and elucidates the primary documentation. The records of a defined project or activity or the records created by a person or organization form a collection or corpus. The term 'collection' has a specialized meaning in an archival context. It is often used to distinguish an artificial collection from archival FONDS. A collection is brought together from a variety of sources while archival fonds are generated organically by a single person or organization. The term 'collection' is also used more generally to mean any group of material with some unifying characteristic" (Conathan, 2011, pp. 236–7).

Archival records present the advantages of being unique, lasting and multipurpose, so that their benefits regard not only language documentation, but lead also to increasing the accountability of linguistic data and analysis, to stimulating researches, to becoming a resource for community revitalization and to documenting the history of linguistics (Conathan, 2011, pp. 236–9). Thus, all the collected sources should be the object of scientific studies that should not be purely normative but should describe the status of the language (both archaic and innovative traits) to make the speakers aware of the changes of the language.

Finally, corpus planning should provide the dialect with all the instruments necessary to make it equally available, by removing any IT barriers, for instance, develop keyboards for non-Latin scripts. Technology can be a barrier between both generations as well as the rich and the poor: "as barriers to IT access continue to erode, endangered language projects must look toward the future of technology, not the present" (Holton, 2011, p. 372).

Status Planning

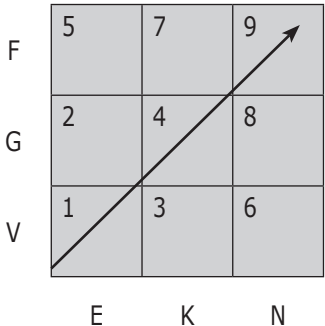
Status planning refers to the official status. Every dialect should be recognized as a language but not necessarily as an official language: everyone should be allowed to speak in the idiom he/she prefers, also in all the spheres of public life (at the supranational, national and local levels), even if the chosen idiom is not the language of an institution. On the other hand, dialects should not be forced to occupy all the domains, since the key aim is to ensure the survival of dialects as means of communication of everyday life, being the higher domains occupied by the *Dachsprache*; thus, the aim should not be a situation of complete bilingualism, but rather a situation of *diglossia* or *dilalia*. This fact does not forbid dialects to occupy over time also the 'highest' domains of communications. According to the following table, representing Kloss' grid, the development stages (*Entwicklungsstufen*) of a language are nine.

Status planning should take into account not just the necessities of the institutions, but above all the rights of the individual that have two dimensions: one primarily individual and another primarily collective. The first dimension involves:

...continuity from one generation to the next over time. It is therefore a linguistic human right to acquire the cultural heritage of the preceding generations, initially in primary socialization in the family and close community (Phillipson, Rannut, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994, p. 11f.).

Table 1

Development stages of a language (Kloss, 1987, p. 304)

V: volkstümliche Prosa (etwa der Volksschulstufe entsprechend) (<i>Popular prose</i>)	
G: gehobene Prosa (etwa der Oberschulstufe entsprechend) (<i>Texts pertaining to high levels of official education</i>)	
F: Forscherprosa (etwa der Hochschulstufe entsprechend) (<i>(University) research text</i>)	
E: eigenbezogene Themen, die die eigene Sprache, ihre Literatur, ihr Land und seine Kultur (einschl. Religion) betreffen (<i>Topics oriented to its own community</i>)	
K: kulturkundliche (geisteswissenschaftliche) Themen (<i>The Humanities</i>)	
N: Themen der Naturwissenschaft und der Technologie (<i>Natural sciences and technology</i>)	

The second dimension “involves *cooperation* between individuals, binding together a group, a people, a population of a country, through sharing the languages and cultures of all” (Phillipson, Rannut, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1994, p. 11f.). The topic of the respect for language rights has been recently reaffirmed by Réaume and Pinto who assert that “negative language liberties, such as linguistic freedom of expression, are not based exclusively on the communicative value of language” and that “one has a right to express oneself in a particular language or to use it in conversation with other speakers even if one is able to communicate the same message in the dominant language” (2012, p. 47).

Prestige Planning

The activities of prestige planning aim at strengthening a dialect, by counteracting the fact that a dialect does not occupy all the domains of communication and that its status is weaker than the one of languages. Prestige planning regards the way in which a dialect is perceived within society, it supports the idea that a dialect has a unique cultural value, both for the individual and society, thus playing a fundamental role in the reversing language shift. It differentiates “activities aimed at promoting a positive view of a language from those concerned with political status or functions” (Sallabank, 2011, p. 283). Such activities can consist of favoring the presence of a dialect in the media, on the internet, and in schools, to spread the awareness of the importance of the cultural value of a language as a fundamental part of the intangible cultural heritage⁹.

When a linguistic community feels its own language to be subordinated, language shift is perceived as ‘natural’: within a context where the dominant language offers the best economic possibilities, traditional languages are to be associated to poverty and backwardness. In such cases, the activities of prestige planning aim at counteracting such situations, thus playing a fundamental role in reversing language shift. To persuade a community to maintain the language is not easy, and implies, on the one hand, “improving language proficiency and creating new speakers, usually through teaching” (acquisition planning), on the other hand,

⁹ See also Bernini (2013a) for the ‘ecolinguistic capital’.

"ensuring that people *want* to speak the language" (prestige planning) (Sallabank, 2012, pp. 111–12)¹⁰.

Acquisition Planning

Along with Sallabank (2012, pp. 113–16) four main strategies of acquisition planning can be distinguished: 'language nests', 'immersion education', 'school-based revitalization' as well as 'adult and community-based language learning'. 'Language nests' aim at creating "natural space for young children to be exposed to a language through community-run play-schemes, often with native-speaker helpers" and "combat the loss of intergenerational transmission by replacing and/or supplementing the family domain" (ibid.) Such programs focus especially on children but also involve adults, by encouraging them to speak the revitalized language at home. The acquisition of a language is usually successful when intensive programs are carried out: just through an 'immersion education' significant results can be achieved. The 'school-based revitalization' can be successful to the extent of what pertains the school: it can happen that children speak currently the revitalized language at school but not inside family. In addition, the 'school-based revitalization' implies that schools recognize "home language and culture patterns and adapt their teaching methods and goals to the home rather than insisting that children and the home give up on heritage language and culture" (Spolsky, 2012a, p. 6). The last strategy, 'adult and community-based language learning', which can be seen complementary or alternative to formal education, consists of pairing one-to-one a fluent speaker with a learner or latent speaker, and has proved to be efficacious (especially in case of Native American communities). Acquisition planning should of course take into consideration the importance of information technologies, such as C(omputer) A(ssisted) L(anguage) L(earning), electronic dictionaries and web portals (Holton, 2011, pp. 381–88).

Family Language Planning

Spolsky (2012a, pp. 4–5) asserts that there are various often disregarded domains: supra-national organizations, states, regional and local governments, army, business, work, media, education, religion, neighborhood and family. The present article takes into consideration just the family domain, which is the most important one, given that whenever family language transmission takes place, language shift is unlikely to happen¹¹ (maybe such observations are valid also for the concept of neighborhood, since neighbors often have frequent contacts with the family).

Fa(mily) l(anguage) t(ransmission) is defined by Lambert (2009, p. 298) as "a complementary bottom-up contribution" which is further explained as follows:

"...has always been made by families, notably parents, who disperse the social, economic, cultural and cognitive benefits of multilingualism among individuals and society by deciding to personally pass on a language other than English. Some reasons for doing so may be the wish to preserve

10 At this point, also the topic of preservations *in vivo* and *in vitro* should be taken into account (Calvet 1996): in the first case speakers solve 'naturally' the problems linked to the linguistic status, while the second one identify a 'laboratory approach' (and speakers may not to be confident in such an approach).

11 For the usually disregarded importance of the role played by family both in language maintenance and reversing language shift see Sallabank (2012, p. 112).

a personal identity, the need to maintain family communication or the express aim of securing advantages for their children”.

Thus, “FaLT is the fundamental prior activity which initiates and establishes a particular language habit for the youngest members of the family” (ibid., p. 299).

Conclusion

Planning a dialect is different from planning a language, because dialects have a weaker status in respect to (officially recognized) languages, supported by institutions. Thus, we should change our point of view and not propose at the local level the traditional language planning, but, starting from the dialect, carry out a bottom-up process in which institutions are also involved whenever their goal is to satisfy the needs of the general public and not their own ones. This fact entails the recognition of the centrality of the general public in language policy.

There are two founding reasons on which dialect planning is based:¹² language rights, i.e. the right of any person to speak the language he/she prefers, and culture, since the preservation of a language is fundamental for the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage. In fact, I would underline that preserving a dialect means preserving not just a language, but also the culture based on that language that in turn can play an important role in the preservation of the language itself. This should lead to the awareness of the importance of the studies related to the cultures of territories: such studies, going beyond the horizon of political institutions, should be recognized as a fundamental and stand-alone branch of knowledge. By taking inspiration from the field of the *Altertumswissenschaft*, they should cover all the branches of culture to be perceived as a sort of ‘*Örtlichkeitswissenschaft*’. But we must keep in mind that the cornerstone, the leading actor, of a culture is always the language. Along with Joshua Fishman, one can assert that languages are the keys to cultures (see Astori, 2010, p. 101); when we do not have such keys anymore, our cultures remain locked, thus forbidding us to deeply understand our histories, our behaviors, our thoughts and our lives.

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¹² For similar concepts see Bernini (2013b, pp. 96–97).

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KALBŲ IŠSAUGOJIMAS, PERŽENGIANT POLITINĘ DIMENSIJĄ: REKOMENDACIJOS DIALEKTŲ PLANAVIMUI

Santrauka. Pastaraisiais metais dėka kalbos planavimo iniciatyvų, kurios *inter alia* apima kalbų pripažinimą politiniu lygmeniu, susidomėta kalbų išsaugojimo klausimais. Siame straipsnyje pristatomas tyrimas pagrįstas dichotomine situacija: kalbos,

turinčios oficialiosios kalbos statusą ir plačiai vartojamos įvairiose institucijose, ir kalbos, kurios tokio statuso neturi ir yra priskiriamos dialektų kategorijai. Kadangi skirtumai tarp kalbų ir dialektų yra iš esmės sociolingvistiniai, o ne vien tik kalbiniai, netikslinga kalbos oficialųjį statusą laikyti atskaitos tašku kalbų išsaugojimo procese. Be to, žinant, kad oficialiosios kalbos statusas paprastai suteikiamas tik mažam skaičiui kalbų, siekiant išsaugoti kalbas, neturinčias oficialiosios kalbos statuso, reikalingi kiti sprendimai. Vienu iš tokių sprendimų galėtų būti *dialektų planavimo* iniciatyvos, kurių pagrindinis tikslas ne plėsti kalbos vartojimą įvairiuose domenuose, o siekti ją išsaugoti. Šiame tyrime dialektų planavimas analizuojamas apimant penkis etapus: (1) *tekstyno planavimas* pirmiausia susijęs su kalbų dokumentavimu; (2) *statuso planavimas*, apimantis tam tikras kalbos išsaugojimo iniciatyvas, be oficialaus statuso pripažinimo kalbinių teisių atžvilgiu; (3) *prestizo planavimas* – pusiausvyros išlaikymas tarp kalbų ir dialektų, pasižyminčių „silpnėsiu“ statusu, skatinant kalbų vartotojų suvokimą, kad kiekviena kalba yra neatsiejama kultūros dalis; (4) *kalbų mokymo planavimas*, apimantis kalbų mokymo strategijas; (5) *kalbos vartojimo šeimoje planavimas*, skirtas stiprinti kalbos vartojimo tradicijas šeimoje.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: dialektų planavimas, kalbos planavimas, kalbų politika, kalbinės teisės, nematerialus kultūros paveldas.