

Patterns in Language, Culture, and Society:  
Sub-Saharan Africa. OSU WPL 19.1-2 (1975)

What Do We Know About Language Planning?  
(A Preliminary Statement)

Joshua A. Fishman  
Yeshiva University

1. Introduction

The past five years have witnessed a rapid growth of interest and of findings or conclusions with respect to language planning. What follows is a brief enumeration of those aspects of this topic whose lawful or orderly characteristics are currently recognizable.

2. Corpus planning

1. Corpus planning can be successfully carried on, and by non-authoritarian regimes or agencies rather than only by authoritarian ones, and roughly by the same kind of marshaling of expertise as is involved in other types of centralized social planning.

2. Corpus planning has been done at such a wide variety of linguistic levels (phonology, lexicon, syntax, number system) that it is reasonable to conclude that "anything can be planned" into or out of a language, within the limits of language universals.

3. Both the usage goals and the attitudinal goals of corpus planning are highly predictable via multivariate analyses, which does not mean, of course, that all of the most predictive factors are manipulable or usable.

4. Adult populations, whose principal language learning experiences predate the period of major corpus-planning efforts, are attitudinally mobilizable even if their usage patterns are already difficult to alter.

5. Younger populations in successive generations are successively less mobilizable attitudinally on behalf of ongoing corpus planning, but they are more manipulable with respect to usage per se.

6. Degree of knowing, using and liking the "products" of corpus planning (three possible criteria of corpus planning success) are neither highly interrelated nor even positively interrelated considerations. As a result, measures of all three are crucial, as are measures of a wide variety of social indicators, in order to effectively predict any one of them.

7. The desirable direction of corpus planning (i.e. the model of "good language") depends primarily on politically derived models or anti-models. Nevertheless, directional rationales ultimately become authenticistic.

### 3. Status planning

8. The implementational manipulation of rewards and punishments should differentiate between acquisition (learning the specified language or variety), use, and attitudinal favorability, since quite different demographic, cognitive and emotional factors are related to each.

9. Realistic and gradual functional goals are a major device for long term functional success where power is lacking to bring about immediate short term success. Generational displacement often removes ideologized opposition permitting initially restricted functions to be subsequently expanded.

10. Non-totalistic ideologies, stressing utility rather than ethnic or religious values, are a major device for long term ideological success where power is insufficient to bring about immediate, short term success.

### 4. Conclusion

All in all, much more comparative research is needed, combining both micro- and macro-level data, and attending to both linguistic and societal considerations, in order to advance language planning theory further.