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## The Project of Forging Socio-Cultural Community in Language

Joseph Lo Bianco

**Abstract** This paper begins with a basic distinction about a more society oriented version of sociolinguistics contrasted with a more language oriented sociolinguistics. This distinction forms the basis of an analysis of the role of nationality in language planning, using the more society-oriented version of sociolinguistics. The theories of nationalism that have addressed language have made use of dominantly European versions of society-oriented sociolinguistics. However, the unique characteristics of Chinese, in which the written code is stabilising across great differences of spoken form needs to be incorporated into reinvigorated sociolinguistic theorising. Accordingly, the paper traces thinking about language policy and planning in relation to Chinese and puts forward a proposal for a new sociolinguistics, and especially a new language policy and planning, based on more accurately representing the Chinese reality. Building from an initial classification from Heinz Kloss about the United States, in this chapter I propose five spheres of activity that characterise a society oriented language planning theory for Chinese. These spheres are jurisdiction, sovereignty, influence, retention and recovery, and, finally, acquisition. Although this is put forward as a tentative proposal the paper deals with some implications of this new framework drawing on recent research in the United States, by Wang (2007), from Australia by Guo-Qiang and Lo Bianco (2007), and from Singapore by Zhao, Liu and Hong (2006) to explore how robust and viable the framework is across diverse settings.

**Keywords** Language policy and planning; Chinese as a Foreign Language; sociolinguistics; language education; early language learning; language shift and maintenance; multilingualism

## 1. Introduction

Classically there have been two orientations to socio-linguistics, one closer to society, the other closer to language. A language-oriented sociolinguistics describes and analyses society within language. If we prefer this approach we look at how gender, social position, profession or nationality, and many other kinds of identity, are marked, displayed or negotiated in how we speak, read and write. A society-oriented sociolinguistics describes and analyses language within society. If we prefer this approach we look at role and importance of language, languages and different forms and kinds of communication in society.

Both of these, the broadly social and the broadly linguistic, are brought closer together with contemporary views of language that stress performativity and contemporary views of society that stress activity. These approaches to language and society focus on what we **do** rather than what we **are**, and view language as what we accomplish in communication rather than what we know in abstract.

By focusing more on performance, i. e. the doing or activating of sociolinguistics we open up a new space. We see that language and society do not just **reflect** each other but that they sometimes, or often, **constitute** each other. Here we enter a richer and deeper realm of thought which is well reflected in the conference program. The two themes of the conference; i) language and identity and ii) domain specific language use are extremely well chosen and give us ample scope for broad-ranging and rich discussion of both society oriented socio-linguistics and language oriented sociolinguistics. At a time of rapid globalization language issues impact and shape business, education and daily living and sociolinguistics has a wide relevance in many fields.

My paper today stresses the **SOCIO** more than the **LINGUISTIC**. I will discuss language policy and planning (LPP) and put forward an overarching approach to LPP that locates it within a socio-legal and political framework.

## 2. Nationality as Identity

The most well known communication-based community is the nation. The nation is ultimately the outcome of a widespread (but by no means universal), project for the creation of socio-cultural community, in which, though by no means always, has language played a key role.

The nation is so deeply entrenched in human consciousness that most people regard nations, and nationality, as natural, or even as primordial groupings. If we understand the

nation as a network of links, affiliations, attachments and knowledge which can be seen as a horizontal axis of identity. In this way of seeing the nation it is a psychological entity. When we connect the nation to a system of administration, of authority, and power, then we produce the essential lineaments of modern countries, or national states, or nation states. The administration context is like a vertical axis that organises the horizontal axis of identity. This socio-legal and political context makes possible conscious state intervention into language use.

An example of how successful this process can be comes from the very names of languages. States carry the names of people's: China, Italy, Korea or Sweden, for example, is words that name nations as well as states. In many cases we go the next step of adding a distinctive language, a "national" language, attached to both nation and state. So French, names several entities: France (i. e. a state), a nation (i. e. a self-conscious people-hood), and the forms of language use that are sanctioned by that state on behalf of that nation (i. e. a national language and a standard national literacy). To do this, however, in the face of massive variation in all of these entities, variation of ethnicity, race, dialect, literacy, language and in other forms, means that the state must control, or at least influence, what is idealized and held-up as acceptable practice in the face of demographic and socio-linguistic community. The state therefore attempts to controls the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) and the imagined communication, basing one on the other.

The underlying reasoning of nationality based statehood is that nations are either primary structures of humanity, and that distinctive nations deserve to have their own states. In fact this is far from true, and is proved wrong on many counts. For a start there are many distinctive nations that have never had states. There are some distinctive nations once had states that no longer have them. There are many states that are comprised of diverse nationalities. There are many languages that are used by people's who see themselves as distinctive and unconnected to others who use the same so called national language. So language, state and nation although we assume they "go together" are in fact very imperfectly aligned.

Fishman's (1972) analysis of how languages forge socio-cultural community notes three basic means. First, distinctive languages mark what is culturally authentic for given populations, usually by looking backwards in time, or downwards socially to populations, often rural ones, that are seen to be the least contaminated by outside influence. In this way a national language expresses what is culturally authentic or pristine in a given population's ex-



perience. Second, languages work as tools of political unification by forging bonds of shared knowledge, experience and even empathy, across different varieties that exist in a given society. Third, languages can forge socio-cultural community in a banal way too, as means of administrative efficiency, therefore enabling people to imagine themselves as belonging together even when they might perceive themselves to be different in other ways. This scheme means that national languages interact with nationalism by the nationing of peoples, which is a cultural activity; and the servicing of states, which is an activity of statehood), in these three broad ways.

Later I will put forward a new overarching framework for LPP which tries to deal with a problem inherent in this otherwise very worthwhile approach, the absence of political and legal context. All of the nationing activity which Fishman identifies depends on and requires that political jurisdiction is established and able to operate without challenge and therefore it isn't possible to discuss the LINGUISTICS here without establishing the premises of the SOCIOlogical context first.

### **3. Language Policy and Planning**

The science of LPP has an ancient history as a practice and a recent history of theorisation. Most of its theorisation comes from two contexts, first the context of European decolonisation and second, the context of the forging of European national states, especially European national languages, in both Europe and the New World.

The re-emergence of China, and therefore of Chinese, to world prominence is likely to change some assumptions within LPP and even more widely within Sociolinguistics.

The dominant European languages attained their inter-continental spread on the basis of centuries of political colonizing. However, as Umberto Eco (1997) points out, English is unique among the European-sourced lingua francas because the mid-twentieth century transfer of global dominance from Britain's empire to America's economy was achieved within the same language. No previous power shift where one dominant world power succeeds another has been like this; all past power shifts have involved language shifts. Alongside this retention of English has been a change in the mode of exercising hegemony in the world, so that influence is today more prominent in the exercise of power. As a result political theory of the left, right and center is today full of intense discussions about how to characterize and account for the new meanings and contemporary forms of "empire" and "domination" under conditions of globalization. Globalization effectively means the decline

of exclusive sovereignty and the increase of economic interdependence across the world, the emergence of hybrid systems of economy, culture and governance (Hardt and Negri, 2001; James, 2006; Maier, 2006).

In Hardt and Negri's (2001) estimation we now have Empire without imperialism, under conditions easy to recognize but difficult to understand. Although language attraction (its material utility and cultural capital), cannot be totally accounted for by calculations of commerce and hard power, as though language spread is the soft-power result of politics and economics, history suggests that there is in fact a close relationship between hard economic and political power and language spread. This kind of globalisation is impacting on the essential assumptions of nationality very deeply and even more deeply on the essential assumptions of language based nationality. This is clear in the recent study by David Gradol for the British Council (Lo Bianco, 2005b) whose estimate of almost 3 billion speakers and learners of English worldwide over the next few decades, most of whom see English as a "basic skill" rather than an identity challenge.

The more I reflect on it the more I think that sociolinguistics in the future and also LPP will be deeply impacted by the new world prominence of Chinese. Both have emerged from historical experiences that have not.

While it is unlikely that Chinese will attain the geographic political dispersion of English with its 86 sovereign states, French with its 40 or so, Arabic and Spanish with some 22 sovereign states each using and sustaining these languages, none of this precludes Chinese from any conceivable domain or institution. All these languages, Chinese included, are forging polycentric norms of correctness, i. e. different national varieties, so that despite being called the same name they vary considerably in their local forms. This suggests identity factors pushing languages to localise to reflect divergent national communities of communication.

However, for Chinese an elaborate network of family and region-based communities prepares the ground for its expansion. This already constitutes an effective communication diaspora. The lag of one to two decades between the emergences of Japan to the emergence of Japanese as an educational commodity is being repeated with China and Chinese but with the addition of a more widespread and communicatively vibrant speaker population. Chinese will also shape sociolinguistics and LPP theory because no other of the big world languages has a script centred history and identity.

#### 4. Chinese Language Planning

Recent writing on China's language policy and planning (Gottlieb and Chen, 2001) underscores how little attention has been devoted to the complex issues of language acquisition planning in relation to Chinese. Even less analysis has been devoted specifically to studying the promotion of Chinese internationally, neither among Chinese diasporas nor among populations totally new to Chinese (Yang, 2000):

Much of the language policy analysis available in European languages examining language-in-education planning in China focuses on i) the learning of script, ii) the teaching of China's national minority languages, or iii) the growing importance of English in contemporary China:

Some writers attribute the most recent spike in demand for English to China's admission to the World Trade Organization on December 11, 2001, 15 years after applying (Pang, Zhou and Fu, 2002), and the often unappreciated social, political and economic ramifications of its admission. Other writers add that the hosting by Beijing of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games has stimulated mass learning of English. Key fields of writing about second languages in China include accounts of Chinese varieties of English (Bolton, 2002), or examinations of the identity and cultural consequences of mass study of English (Lam, 2002; Gao, 2005).

Sociologically it appears that China has embarked on its own version of what Pakir (2003), referring to Singapore, has called "English-knowing bilingualism" (see also, Lam, 2002; Qiping and Shubo, 2002).

These pervasive changes within Chinese society, connected with the embrace of market-oriented economic reforms are rightly seen to carry deep cultural implications (Guo, 2004), including personal identity challenges for Chinese learners of English (Adamson, 2002; Gao, 2004). But, as I will argue, the Chinese experience itself will shape the essential disciplines which study these phenomena: sociolinguistics and LPP with its distinctive sense of how a socio-cultural community is forged through language.

The scale of China's emergent status, and the historically deep significance of its new status, warrants the development of a LPP classification system that acknowledges the distinctive circumstances of what is potentially "new English". But the PRC, site of the "... largest language engineering project in the world..." (Zhou and Ross, 2004:1), and host to language policies for more than 2000 years, is often absent from the experiences that have shaped how the body of concepts that make up the science of LPP.

These concepts rest on the fundamental distinction between corpus planning and status planning. In this paper I put forward an alternative system of classification of LPP that I believe will help to represent better the situation of Chinese. This tentative proposal extends initial thinking on spheres of LPP by the German sociolinguist Heniz Kloss. My additions seek to move the scheme more towards a sociolinguistics which deals with language as a performance of identity and in this particular case stresses the SOCIO end of linguistics.

This new scheme is based on a series of overlapping spheres of language policy and planning. There are five components to this system, spheres of i) jurisdiction, ii) sovereignty, iii) influence, IV) retention or recovery, and v) acquisition. These spheres of language policy and planning activity are designed to reflect the wide range of human conscious and planned activity in relation to languages; most obviously learning and teaching, but ultimately also the activities of legal control and political management of institutions or processes of language use in society, such as the systems of authority that govern teaching and learning efforts, the place accorded to national minorities, foreign languages and international promotion of national languages. This system of classification of LPP activity into five spheres does not seek to replace the classical categories of language planning but rather to propose an overarching framework within which LPP occurs.

## 5. Spheres of LPP

In groundbreaking historical work on American language policy Heinz Kloss (1998) distinguishes between the spheres of “jurisdiction” and “sovereignty” in which American language planning occurs. In previous work (Lo Bianco, 2001; Lo Bianco, 2006), I have extended Kloss’s dichotomy to include sphere of “influence” (understood as persuasion and promotion), “retention or recovery” and “acquisition” to produce a five part scheme.

### 5.1 Jurisdiction

The principle of jurisdiction describes a legal kind of LPP activity in domains where political Constitutions are effective without limitations and in settings where legal authority is exclusive, i. e. not shared with any other power, though there are some settings where there is some ambiguity.

Applied to Chinese, this primary notion of jurisdiction as a policy-directing principle refers to the laws, statutes and binding directives of the People’s Republic of China and its uncontested territories. The bulk of writing within the status planning component of con-

ventional LPP is based on this principle (DeFrancis, 1984; Zhou & Sun, 2004). Typically this tradition of work describes historical developments of Chinese languages, relations among varieties of Chinese, state measures on behalf or against language varieties, and provisions for public and institutional recognition of the languages of national minorities. Jurisdiction therefore involves working with assumptions that languages are the property of nations, and therefore the term “national languages” makes sense since languages assume prominence as instruments of state administration (requiring standardization and replicability of forms) and also as symbols of cultural attachment and affiliation.

In the literature of LPP the most common reference to Chinese tends to be about the analysis of orthographic conventions and changes, including the long history of Romanization policy, clearly bounded by legitimate jurisdiction and territory. Indeed, distinguishing between LPP in settings beyond East Asia and those in East Asia, Gottlieb and Chen (2001: 5) note that “reform of script and written language is usually what first springs to the mind of language planners and the general public”. Indeed, for more than three decades from 1954 the national official institution for language in mainland China was called the Chinese Committee on Script Reform (Zhongguo Wenzhi Gaige Weiyuanhui), only being renamed the State Language and Script Commission (Guojia Yuyan Wenzhi Gongzuo Weiyuanhui) in 1986 (Chen, 2001a; Chen, 2001b). However, this focus on the writing form isn’t an aberration of how western LPP scholars analyse China. This is clear when we look at the 2001 Common Language Law which is remarkable for how script features in virtually all articles of the law (Rohsenow, 2004:41-43).

## 5.2 Sovereignty

In Kloss’s terms, the sphere of sovereignty refers to territories which, while under a US umbrella in security, political or juridical terms, are vested with considerable local autonomy. In the Chinese context this definition would encompass territories which while under Chinese jurisdiction in an ultimately legal-political sense are not under immediate Chinese sovereignty. Hong Kong and Macau are the clearest examples of this status.

In its transfer from the exclusive jurisdiction of the United Kingdom to the PRC Hong Kong was constituted as a Special Administrative Region (SAR). The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) was adopted on April 4 1990 by the Seventh National People’s Congress, coming into effect on July 1, 1997. The Basic Law replaced the former constitutional provisions under the Letters Patent and Royal Instructions

of the United Kingdom. Drafted under the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong the Basic Law was signed by the PRC government and the government of the UK on December 19, 1984. For the Chinese part this Special Administrative Region status gives effect to the "One Country, Two Systems" principle.

A similar status was afforded to Macao after the 1999 transfer of political jurisdiction from Portugal to China. In both cases this sovereignty is limited to 50 years when reversion to complete Chinese jurisdiction occurs.

Inevitably, perhaps, such processes and arrangements carry the risk of continuing some level of overlapping jurisdiction, and can be subject to diverse forms of ambiguity. In practice some ambiguity persists into actual policy making for long periods of time. During times of overlap political discourse (the spheres of influence, persuasion and promotion) provides clues as to how ambiguities and conflicts will eventually be resolved.

In Kloss's interpretation of the US constitution the difference between 'fundamental-compulsory' provisions and 'flexible' ones results in the possibility of differential admission to the US polity. The Hong Kong Basic Law, along with its Macao equivalent, supply the same kind of juridical principle to the Chinese polity but in reality differential application is more extensive than for the US. China's 1982 Constitution (PRC, 1982), divides the structures of the State (Section 6, Chapter 3, Articles 112 ) in three levels providing "autonomy" to five regions or provinces, 30 prefectures and 120 "banners", counties and "ethnic townships". Language and national minority status are major determinants of the distribution of levels of autonomy. Just as in the US case where Puerto Rico has been the determining factor influencing Supreme Court decisions relating to Hawaii (1903), the Philippines (1904), Alaska (1905), and American Samoa and the American Virgin Islands among others (Kloss, 1998:195-196) the decolonization of Hong Kong appears to function as a model pattern for the Chinese state.

In these cases the sphere of sovereignty involves overlapping arrangements for legal administration and public policy. In practice it is common to find that education in general and school education in particular, are devolved administratively to levels where sovereignty is overlapping. The Chinese case also contains the additional element of a dispersed and large diaspora. In some settings, the US and Australia in the present volume, and much of SE Asia, this extended Chinese-ness involves minorities at varying stages of local assimilation, both linguistic and cultural, and then autonomous polities, such as Singapore. In the former case there is no dispute about political sovereignty, given its independent political

status, while the latter is subject to ongoing contestation. In LPP terms therefore Singapore and Taiwan represent spheres of jurisdiction within themselves and for both Singapore and Taiwan the sphere of influence, in its two main forms of persuasion and promotion, operate under the sovereignty of the two states. Effectively this means that they are sources for regional and even global promotion of Chinese in their own right as well as in their connections to the Chinese heartland.

### 5.3 Influence

To Kloss's scheme I have added the sphere of influence. This enables a more socially nuanced analysis of LPP practices involving a continuum of activities around persuasion, promotion and attraction. As Chinese increasingly attracts wide social and cultural shaping power it generates an almost automatic demand for its acquisition. Outside of the formal responsibilities of ministries of education it is clear that the vast economic success of the Chinese economy, the "emergence of China" and talk about the future status of the PRC as a superpower with global reach, is attracting independent policy momentum.

Two excellent examples of the discourse that announces such status is contained in the Asia Society of New York, Press Release of July 12 2005 (Asia Society, 2005) and in the 2006 policy statement of the Province of Alberta in Canada which calls on its educators to Seize the Moment (Lo Bianco, Lynch & Rehorick, 2006) meaning that Alberta is interested in promoting Chinese at the same time as China has set up mechanisms to encourage more learning of Chinese abroad and Chinese Canadians make efforts to pass on the language to their children. There are innumerable small signs, such as online and printed sections of Italy's main evening newspaper, *Il Corriere della Sera* offering its readers excerpted articles in Chinese, the direct tie between Australia's mining and energy resources boom and China's economic growth. These are examples of what Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye (2004) calls "soft power".

However, there is another kind of influence that comes under LPP. This is the most institutionalized and strategic form of influence and involves the establishment of state policies and agencies entrusted with the task of promoting national languages and cultures abroad. Take the examples of Korea and Japan. Approximately one decade after Japan and South Korea fully emerged as successful trading economies they each established national cultural agencies for foreign representation and entrusted these with a language spread function. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972, initially under the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, and soon embarked on the development of cultural exchanges, setting up language schools abroad, offering bursaries and scholarships, sponsoring cultural tours, developing language proficiency tests, teaching materials and teacher support activities of various kinds.

The Korea Foundation was established in 1991 with a similar array of cultural, linguistic and exchange activities. In 1987 China established the National Office of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (NOCFL) with a range of activity including the development of a Chinese Proficiency Test for Foreigners (HSK), cultural exchanges and tours, support networks for foreign teachers of Chinese, and a wide array of language teaching supports. In recent years a key focus has been the establishment of joint venture language centers abroad, the Confucius Institutes, possibly the largest ones of these in the world is being established at my university, the University of Melbourne.

Each national language promotion policy has its own special characteristics reflecting the sociolinguistics of the promoting country. However the existence of numerous dispersed Chinese minority populations around the world make the Chinese case less like the British, French or German, Japanese or Korean approaches and more like the Italian. The British Council, Alliance française and Goethe Institute, Japan and Korea Foundations deal mostly with “foreign” language promotion. The Italian cultural institutes and the Dante Alighieri societies because of the high proportion of immigrant Italian dialect speaking learners who make up the populations who study Italian quite different. Although the Italian institutes teach only modern standard Italian, the presence of immigrant populations with identity attachments means they are constantly having to negotiate between “foreign” and “dialectal” connections to the national language, as shown in the study by Totaro-Genevois (2005) of Italy’s foreign cultural policy.

Promotion and spread policies for languages that have dispersed native speaker populations engaged in recovery and retention of the national language, or its varieties, need to adapt their expansion policies when they come up against the more complex sociolinguistics of emigrant communities. The prior existence of emigrants whose language retention activities have often been the bulk of the language learning effort in many foreign settings means that issues of emotional attachment, linguistic variation, and diverse forms of cultural capital are negotiated and accommodated. In recent studies of Chinese teaching in the United States by Wang (2006) and in Australia by Guo-qiang and Lo Bianco (2006), highlight this point.



In these contexts the sphere of influence takes on very local characteristics and is adapted to pre-existing local realities in classrooms where “background” speakers’ needs must be accommodated and in local schools and community cultural settings where norms of culture and language have already defined what it means to be Chinese and to speak Chinese (Hill, 2004).

#### **5.4 Retention or Recovery**

Immigrant community efforts towards intergenerational language retention, and, of course, in the case of Chinese, with acquisition of Modern Standard Chinese (Putonghua), and also with recovery of lost or eroding proficiency in the language are an essentially bottom up kind of community-directed LPP. This sphere of LPP creates more complexity for the teaching of Chinese in many settings, requiring teachers to accommodate to bi and multi-dialectal contexts, bridging programs between dialects and occasionally differences of opinion and attachment to diverse linguistic norms. The emotional and identity issues that sometimes characterize diaspora contexts invoke negotiation and debate about questions of language which in other cases are less problematical and centrally determined by source country officials and processes.

Much of the language influence of home country policies comes up against the realities of various stages of language mixing and language shift and when combined with pre-existing and vibrant dialects have meant that negotiation around norms and standards in the context of emigrant settings and issues of “common speech”, identity and home country norms are some of the terrain that official Chinese activity is now traversing (Wang, 2006; Guo-Qiang & Lo Bianco, 2006).

As a sphere of LPP however communities of speakers produced through past emigration often supply an ongoing source of learner investment, to use Bonnie Norton’s excellent term, and interest in acquiring contemporary norms or uses of the target language. In Singapore this flies in the face of the state’s deliberate planning for norm and dialect change, as represented in its Speak Mandarin Campaigns. Here we see the spheres of jurisdiction conflicting with the sphere of retention or recovery.

#### **5.5 Acquisition**

Acquisition refers to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. It is the top down counterpart of the Retention or Recovery efforts of communities for intergenerational lan-