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Ulrich Ammon

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Foreword

This volume has developed from a session of the eleventh World Congress of Sociology of the International Sociological Association (ISA) in New Delhi, 18–23 August 1986. This session, which I had proposed to the organizers of the sociolinguistic section of ISA, was named "Functional Types (Status Types) of Language". My call for papers to this session was answered by nine sociolinguists (*Renate Bartsch, *Conrad M. B. Brann, *Hans R. Dua, Ralph W. Fasold, *John Honey, John E. Joseph, Dennis R. Preston, *Alicia Sakaguchi, and *William J. Samarin), of whom six (names asterixed) and myself participated in Delhi. Since the contributions to be expected from the responses were on the one hand quite divergent and would on the other hand have covered the wide topic over which they extended only quite fragmentarily, I tried to gain more contributors, obviously with considerable success. The publisher also supported the idea of a more comprehensive coverage of the topic, i. e. a greater number of contributions.

My original intention was to focus on typological questions of the status and function of languages and language varieties, as the title of the congressional session indicates. However, the participants and contributors did not allow themselves to be confined to such a narrow topic, perhaps because I had not sufficiently stressed its necessity in my invitation. Therefore I had to expand the topic of the volume, if most of the contributions were not to be excluded from it. My own contribution, too, focussed at first on questions of typology. However, under the impression of the wide topical range of the other contributions I changed it entirely, and it took on its present form.

Such a thorough revision of my own contribution seemed all the more justified as I had received practically no comment upon circulating the first draft, except from Hans Goebl to whom I am indebted for this reason. I had proposed that each contributor circulate his paper, but this plan could not be realized. One of the reasons may be that these days most of us feel under pressure to invest our limited time in the production of new publications of our own rather than to comment on those of others.

From the beginning the congressional session and the volume were meant to deal with the status and function of entire languages as well as language varieties. This seemed natural, since both levels often interact,

e. g. in the standard/non-standard types. A standard language (in the sense of an entire language) can hardly be conceived as independent of a standard variety, which, however, is often called a standard language in a terminological confusion of levels of abstraction. The name of the session contained the same confusion using the term *language* generically for 'entire language' as well as 'language variety'. I avoided that confusion afterwards in the circulating first draft of my own contribution by using the term *linguistic system* for the generic concept, which in fact could cover levels of abstraction even above entire languages or below language varieties (groups of languages or subvarietes). It is, in fact, not *a limine* nonsensical to conceive the status or function of such levels of abstraction, e. g. the status of the Germanic vs. the Slavonic languages. Nevertheless, the term *linguistic system* may cause misunderstandings of another nature; it may particularly be associated with certain linguistic schools which have used it more extensively than others. I am grateful to Renate Bartsch's pointing this out to me, continuing my choice of the present title for the volume.

The consistent classification of the final contributions proved futile, at least within my own horizon of understanding. The components and aspects of the general topic of the volume are incredibly manifold, which is reflected strongly in the single contributions, most of which could be subsumed under various subtopics. The classification I finally chose, together with the index, will hopefully provide some helpful orientation to the reader. It goes without saying that other classifications of the contributions would also have been possible.

The difficulties involved in the classification of the contributions are perhaps indicative of the fact that many questions pertaining to the complex topic of this volume remain unanswered. The reader will notice that the basic terms *status* and *function* (of a language or language variety) can be conceptualized in various ways and are by no means automatically unambiguous in their meaning. A specification of the terms as *social status* (or *social function*) may have reduced their polysemy, e. g. may have excluded meanings like 'typological status' (i. e. roughly speaking, 'position in a structural typology of languages or linguistic systems'). This specification could, however, on the one hand provoke misleading analogies, for instance, to the "social status" of an individual in a society, which certainly differs remarkably from what we have in mind with respect to a language or language variety. On the other hand *status* or *function* (without further specification) has, in contrast to *corpus* (roughly 'structure'), been established to some degree, at least in a sociolinguistic context, in the sense which we have in mind here. The meaning of both terms seems to overlap in many contexts, even if at the same time they are often treated as if they were disjunctive. The transformation of these concepts into revealing and precise tools for empirical research remains a task for the future, though

steps in that direction have already been taken in the contributions to this volume. General theoretical and methodological approaches are as important in that respect as the detailed treatment of single functional or status types of languages or language varieties, or the application of the concepts to specific situations. This volume will hopefully stimulate further attempts at the clarification and theoretical and methodological elaboration of these basic concepts of sociolinguistics.

English, which was also the main working language of the congress in New Delhi, was the natural choice for the language of publication. In Delhi, Alicja Sakaguchi chose to present her paper in German but encountered only very limited comprehension on the part of some participants. Nevertheless I accepted the explicit wish of two participants to write their contributions in languages other than English (but not their native tongues in both cases): Hans Goebl, a native speaker of German who chose French, and Žarko Muljačić, a native speaker of Serbo-Croat, who chose German. May this alternative choice of languages of publication demonstrate on the one hand that there are still a few languages other than English in scientific communication, even in international scientific communication, and, on the other hand, remind us of the additional burden placed on all those scientists who are not native speakers of English. It seemed compatible with my own somewhat critical view of the present language situation of international scientific communication to limit corrections of the English of the non-native speakers largely to the avoidance of misunderstandings, rather than to enforce stylistic refinements, for which, by the way, I need costly help myself.

It should be mentioned, that two outstanding sociolinguists, or perhaps rather sociologists of language, who had agreed to contribute, were unfortunately unable to do so in the end: Joshua A. Fishman for reasons of health and overcommitment, and Heinz Kloss, who fell seriously ill before he could take up work and tragically died on 13 June 1987. He warned me shortly before his death in a touching letter that, according to his doctor, he would probably no longer be able to write his article. Nevertheless, both writers have contributed substantially in an indirect way to this volume, since a good deal of the contributors owe important insights to them, as is, though perhaps insufficiently, noticeable in the references or bibliographies. Some of the concepts Kloss introduced into sociolinguistics or the sociology of language are even explicitly made the main topic of some contributions (Goebl's, Muljačić's). Therefore, this volume may hopefully contribute, at least to a very limited degree, to maintaining the memory of Heinz Kloss, which would be in accordance with the wish his daughter, Bertha S. Behrens-Kloss, expressed in a letter to me.

Tragically, Donald C. Laycock died while this volume was being processed, shortly after having returned to me the corrected proofs of his article on Pitcairn-Norfolk. May his detailed and inspiring study, probably the last he completed, be widely read and remind the reader of the brilliance and devotion of this colleague. I am deeply indebted to him for his unfailing co-operation in the present volume.

Talking of those to whom I am indebted for being able to edit this volume and to contribute to it, I wish to draw attention once more to all the participants in the Delhi session and all the other contributors to the volume. In addition the excellent secretarial staff of the German department of the University of Duisburg should be mentioned, of whom Helga Goebels, but particularly and decisively Beate Scholten lended technical support to the successful accomplishment of the complete manuscript. Grateful mentions should also go to Ellen Raith, the secretary of the Germanic Department at the Australian National University in Canberra, who helped in the circulation of mail during my stay there. Susan Long, my student assistant in Duisburg, was of great help correcting my English, where it proved necessary. I must not forget the friendly encouragement I received from Professor Heinz Wenzel of the de Gruyter publishing company upon my enquiry as to the possibility of publishing the volume there. Finally, I am indebted first to the *Volkswagen Stiftung* (Volkswagen foundation) for granting me an *Akademie-Stipendium* (fellowship), and freeing me from teaching and administrative obligations during the summer semester 1985, thus enabling me to engage in the theoretical preparations for this volume and other related publications; secondly I am indebted to the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German research foundation) for paying the costs of my journey to New Delhi, which together with the work in the congressional session, was vital for the realization of this volume.

Duisburg, May 1988 Ulrich Ammon

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Chapter I:
General Description and Typological Schemes

Determining the Status and Function of Languages in Multinational Societies

by WILLIAM F. MACKEY, Quebec City (Canada)

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1. *Introduction: Definitions and Distinctions*

If we study what has been written and said on the status and function of languages, we find much confusion – both logical and ideological. These concepts are intertwined with those of prestige and survival. One reads

of dominant languages and dominated languages, of minority languages and minoritized languages, and the like. Unless we have some clear and objective notions of these basic components of all language problems, we are unlikely to understand the forces which determine the life of languages in society.

What do we mean by status and function? The two terms are often confused with one another and also with another term, "prestige". Basically the essential difference between prestige, function and status is the difference between past, present and future. The prestige of a language depends on its record, or what people think its record to have been. The function of a language is what people actually do with it. The status of a language depends on what people can do with it, its potential. Status therefore is the sum total of what you can do with a language — legally, culturally, economically, politically and, of course, demographically. This is not necessarily the same as what you do with the language, although the two notions are obviously related, and indeed interdependent. They can also be connected with the prestige of a language. Let us illustrate the differences. Classical Latin has had a lot of prestige but it has few functions. Swahili has a lot of functions but little prestige. Irish Gaelic has status, official status, but few exclusive functions.

Status and function are therefore related to other, more peripheral concepts like prestige which may be largely symbolic, representing the classical (or high) form of a language which all respect but few use. Conversely, in the long run, status may accord prestige to a language. Status defined as what one can do with a language (its potential, as opposed to what one does with it (its functions) has several dimensions — demographic, geographic, cultural, economic and juridical. Each may have developed from different extra-linguistic sources. The legal status of a minority language for example may have its origin in a perceived basic right to identity as a component of human dignity.

As opposed to status, the functions of a language, as defined as what one in fact does with it, can be directly observed in the language behaviour of the population of any area. The status of a language can often be modified by changing its functions. But only within certain limits; for the history of language status modification teaches us that, like all things political, the politics of language is the art of the possible. Any language status strategy must depend on surveys which can reveal the difference between the status (*de jure*) and the corresponding (*de facto*) functions.

The difference may be enormous. For even *de facto* juridical functions can operate independently of any legal status. For example, all juridical functions in the USA are performed in English. Yet there is nothing in the American constitution that gives English any status as an official language. Since every one is presumed to know the language, there was

perhaps no need to specify its status. Contrariwise, endowing a language with legal status does not assume that everyone knows it; nor does it bestow knowledge of the language on the people for whom it is official. For example, in much of Africa, some 90% of the people have no knowledge of the official language of their country, even though it is presumed to be the vehicle of communication between the government and its citizens (Mugesera 1987). Of course there is a difference between what one is allowed to do with a language and what one is able to do. The legal status of Irish in Ireland is such that everyone is allowed to work in the language; but not everyone is able to do so. Language function depends on language competence, and competence is maintained by use (Mackey 1979). The Irish work in the language they know best — English, which has conserved its economic potential. Its status is economic. It is also cultural, in the sense that there are books in English for every conceivable interest and in such great numbers. Number, of course, is basic to the status of any language in all its dimensions, especially the demographic one. If we combine, or rather multiply, demographic status with economic and cultural status some languages have no need for any other status, juridical or political.

It seems that the need to accord status to a language arises in situations of language conflict either felt or feared. In Canada the presence of both English and French created a need to specify which language would be used, and where. In India, the presence of Hindi and English and other languages made it necessary to provide language status by legal means. And recently in the United States; faced with the rising tide of Spanish, especially in the South, the U.S. Senate has since 1983 been pondering a joint resolution to ammend the constitution in order to make English the official language (U.S. Senate 1983).

Here again, status has meaning only within the context in which a language may be used. We can do more with a language everyone understands than with one no one knows but all admire. A regional tongue may have more status (potential) in a village than does a national or international language. This, however, depends on the type of organization which frames the context of language use.

2. *Types of Multinational Organization*

Since there are thirty times more living languages in the world than there are countries to house them, some states must harbour more than one language within their frontiers. The fact that more than one language group lives within the borders of a sovereign state however, does not mean that its existence is admitted by the state. Some nation-states like

France and Japan recognize only their own official national language. Some of the other 185 sovereign states give national official status to more than one language. The official languages of these multinational states are not however all native to or exclusive to the state; some are shared by several countries. Since the middle of the twentieth century many of the post-colonial sovereign states have accorded official status to the language of their former colonial masters. A few countries, like Cameroon for example, have limited themselves to two such official languages, in this case, French and English.

The fact that a language has official status within a state does not mean that it is known by all the people in the state. Nor is there any relationship between the size of the population and the number of languages recognized as national or official. Switzerland recognizes four national and three official languages; its large neighbor, France, recognizes only one. Nearly all sovereign states, however, even the most officially monolingual, like France and Japan, harbour communities speaking a language other than that of the state.

Although most sovereign states recognize more than one official language, some of the supranational bodies to which they adhere recognize only one – English for the Commonwealth; French for the Francophonie. Most of these same sovereign states belong to other supranational or multinational organizations where more than one language has official status – five are official in the United Nations; nine are official in the European Community. Within each of these sovereign states, however, officially recognized languages may enjoy differing degrees of status. Firstly, the languages may be co-official countrywide as are English and French in Canada; French and Dutch in Belgium; Finnish and Swedish in Finland; English and Irish in Ireland; German, French and Franconian in Luxembourg; and German, French and Italian in Switzerland (McCrea 1985/1986).

Secondly, some multinational states accord only regional co-official status to some of their constituent languages. This is the case for Basque and Catalan in Spain and Frisian in the Netherlands.

Thirdly, some states may simply tolerate a limited number of their constituent languages. This is the case of Basque and Catalan in France, for example. This tolerance may be limited in official scope such as use in sectarian schools, or the acceptance of the language as a school subject for university entrance, as has been the status of Breton and Corsican in France. Or the tolerance may be limited to the private sector, as is the case of Sardinian and Provençal. Finally, the language may be officially interdicted. In the past centuries, this had been the case for Irish in Ireland, Welsh in England, Basque and Catalan in Spain, and Basque, Catalan, Breton, Occitan, Alsatian and Corsican in France.

The type of multinational state depends on the context in which it has originated and developed. Its birth may have been the result of the accommodation which results in a confederation of states such as that which created modern Switzerland and Canada. Or it may have been the result of a compromise intended to preserve national unity, as is the case for modern Belgium (McRae 1985/1986).

On the other hand, it may have been the result of the imposition of the ideology of a winning faction in an internal conflict. Although the French Revolution, for example, first tended in the direction of a confederation of provinces each with its cultural identity (the Girondin option), it ended by converting the country into a highly centralized nation-state, intolerant of any type of language diversity (the Jacobin option).

The place of minority languages in multinational states depends on the history of the inclusion within the state of the peoples who speak them. This may have been the consequence of conquest, the by-product of colonialism or the ideology of nationalism. Whatever the cause, at issue is a conflict of principles between the right of the state to political cohesion in the interest of the common good, the right of an ethnic group to its cultural identity, and the right of the individual to freedom of association. In practice, one of these principles is generally claimed to outweigh the other two.

3. *Types of Status*

We have defined the status of a language operationally as "what people can do with the language" as opposed to its functions, that is, to "what they actually do with it".

What one can do with a language depends in part on the language itself, its linguistic status. If, for example, it has no writing system, one cannot use it for written communications. Status also depends on the number of people with whom one can communicate in the language and on their distribution, that is, on the demographic status of the language. What one can do with a language also depends on what is available in it — books, films, and other cultural products (cultural status). Finally what people do with a language depends on what they are allowed, compelled or forbidden to do with it (legal status).

3.1. *Linguistic Status*

Applying our operational criterion to a language as a system of structures and units, with varying degrees of standardization and lexical extension, it becomes evident that one can do more with some languages than one can with others. Even the most complete dictionaries of languages like