

Adresse des critiques

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À propos des critiques

Edmond Brent a enseigné la pédagolinguistique et la sociolinguistique à l'Université de Toronto (Institut d'études pédagogiques de l'Ontario) et à l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Chercheur au Conseil (supérieur) de la langue française et conseiller linguiste à l'Office (québécois) de la langue française, il s'est également activé dans la pratique de l'aménagement linguistique du Québec. Ses intérêts de recherche incluent la variabilité et l'acceptabilité linguistiques, la socioterminologie et l'espérantologie.

Métisse afro-amérindienne et chercheuse en psycholinguistique et en sciences cognitives, **Cora O. Brent-Palmer** a fait des études doctorales à l'Université de Toronto (IÉPO) et à l'Université McGill (Montréal). Elle a dirigé des recherches à l'IÉPO et au Conseil des ministres de l'éducation du Canada. Actuellement, elle met au point une approche écologique à l'étude des nouveaux médias de communication au regard de la diversité linguistique urbaine et du maintien des cultures indigènes des Amériques et de l'Afrique.



Tessa Carroll. *Language Planning and Language Change in Japan.*
Richmond: Curzon Press. 2001. 276 pp.

Reviewed by Liu Haitao

This book analyses developments in language planning in Japan at the end of the twentieth century. Unlike other works on similar topics, the author treats the language as a whole, rather than concentrating just on the script. People often consider that the main task of language planning in countries using Chinese characters is reform of the script, but in the beginning of the book the author sets up an interesting and different mission for herself. According to her, language “is an integral part of a culture and society, and one of the central roles of national language planning is in the establishment and maintenance of national identity. It is language as part of national image and identity that is at the core of my interest in language planning” (p. 1). This unifying vision informs her analysis of socio-cultural, political, and economic change.

If the purpose of language planning is to resolve language problems, in this book we can learn the role of language planning in the production and promotion of desirable language attitudes and behaviors, and how these form part of Japan's self-image and identity.

Chapter One covers the theory of language planning, in general and with specific reference to Japan. Because the author aims to examine the ways in which language planning is used to construct an image of Japan, the ideological aspect of language planning is emphasized. In the first part of this chapter, the author offers definitions of almost all of the key terms used in the study of language planning; she also introduces and summarizes the basics of the theory of language planning, the objectives and goals of language planning, and its ideologies. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to how Japan fits into these general paradigms. The author provides a working definition of the term 'language planning' as "the umbrella term for the broad range of activities seeking to change language and its use; this includes government bodies as well as individuals and interest groups" (p. 13). Topics covered include language planning and language policy (a history and definition of terms), language reform, language problems, language treatment, standardization and standard languages, ideologies and motivation, language and national identity, goals and objectives of language planning, and language planners and policy-makers. As a professor of applied linguistics, working in broadcasting and communication, I am glad to read the related content in this chapter, namely that the state broadcasting system plays a crucial role in the development of language planning and policy. In Japan, NHK has a dual role in language planning: "first in helping to define the standard language, particularly in its spoken form, and what is acceptable usage; and second in disseminating this throughout Japan" (p. 47). In fact, NHK has a group dedicated to language research. This is very rare among similar broadcasting organizations in other countries. This group carries out research on broadcasting language, public linguistic attitudes, dialects, and other aspects of language. All these topics are not unfamiliar to my colleagues at CUC, but I do not know whether there exist other broadcasting stations doing similar research. Perhaps the NHK model is worth following in other countries with similar linguistic situations; the author contends that NHK has an important role in language planning in Japan by providing broad circulation of language usage.

Chapter Two sketches a brief history of language planning in Japan. Given that Japan has developed a highly successful postwar economy and that its relations with the rest of the world have changed, how can it make language

policy reflect these social changes, and how can it adjust language policy to solve newly occurring language problems? The author reviews the history in sections dealing with the Meiji and Taishō period and the first reforms (establishment of a standard language, spreading the standard language, reform of the written language, early moves toward script reform), the 1920s (broadcasting and its beginnings and influence), the 1930s (brakes on reform), immediate postwar reforms, the 1960s to the 1980s, and finally the 1990s. This historical overview emphasizes a number of recurrent themes in Japanese language policy and planning discussions. The history makes it clear that in differing social situations we should perhaps use different solutions to the same language problems.

Language may be seen as a barometer for the state of the nation, and as an indicator of social structures, of people's behaviors and attitudes, and of social norms. This is the focus of Chapter Three. First, the author cites others' viewpoints on four issues: dealing with disorder in language, honorific language, young people's language, and male and female language. These areas are interlinked. They are closely associated with social roles and relationships and are very useful in understanding the relations between language policy and social change. On the relationship between language and society, after investigating linguistic change, the author asks a fascinating question: "If the linguistic system that manifests social relations is breaking down, does this mean the social relations themselves are becoming less stable?" (p. 5).

In this third chapter we can see that language reflects social relations. It can also mirror the relationship between the state and its citizens. Language is the most important tool of human communication. If we hope to communicate efficiently with each other in a changing world, we have to perfect this tool to adapt to change. This is the general task of language planning. Chapter Four tells us how Japan fits in. The author guides us through the continuum of Japan's postwar language policy: "from the Emperor indicating his change in status after the war by abandoning the special style of language exclusive to the imperial household, to today's user-friendly language of local government offices" (p. 111).

Chapter Five's title is "Speech and writing, culture and communication in an international age." The chapter focuses on language as a symbol and carrier of Japanese culture, civilization, and heritage in an increasingly global age. The second task of this chapter is to test the axiom that language functions as a tool of communication. These two roles of language may complement or contradict each other, and reconciling the two is frequently one of the tasks of language

planners. The author approaches the problem by examining the promotion of language awareness, the improvement of spoken language skills, foreign influences, broadcasting (the NHK as communicator and cultural repository), perspectives on the writing system and Japanese culture, computers and the writing system, and the relation of script to speech. Many people think that the computer can save Chinese characters because computer programs make it easier to write complex characters. But the author tells us, “if this tendency increases, the case for characters as ideograms is severely weakened, since it is clear that people are selecting characters on the basis of sound, rather than any meaning intrinsic in their visual representation” (p. 178); in other words, “word processors allow people to produce characters, but they are forgetting how to write them” (p. 179). In China we sometimes take up a pen only to find that we have forgotten how to write a required character. Frequent use of the computer only makes the problem more severe.

In the sixth chapter, on “national and regional identities in flux,” the author links language and identity at the local level to such questions as education (from dialect eradication to code-switching), the changing status and image of local dialects versus the standard language, regionalism, *furusato* (native people) and the dialect revival, the role of broadcasting, regional dialects, and linguistic minorities. The author concludes with the observation that “The ideal is still a population fluent in the common language, but which also has access to a variety of local dialects, in order to preserve the qualities associated with them — warm human relations, variety of culture, and community identity” (p. 205).

“Into the twenty-first century” is the title of the final chapter. “As Japan, with the rest of the world, moves into the twenty-first century,” the author writes, “many challenges related to language are on the horizon: the potentially enormous impact on the script of computerization; the process of internationalization and its consequences for Japanese sociolinguistic attitudes in many areas; and social change, in particular the shifting boundaries of the established gender roles and group and hierarchical relations” (p. 210). New tasks are confronting language planners and language policy-makers.

This book is an excellent contribution to language planning and language policy. Although the author’s focus is on Japan, many of the issues treated are significant to other countries and regions. Neustupný describes Japan as “[one of] those nations of the world which developed a most vigorous and interesting system of relatively systematic treatment of language problems” (quoted on p. 50). This book is worth reading by all researchers of language planning and language policy.