

LANGUAGE POLICY

Dr Syd Gould



An introduction to Syd Gould

- Worked with the Huli in Hela Province, mainly in education and training, for over 50 years. Acquired the Huli language.
- Most of the training was done using the Huli language.
- Developed Huli literacy programme, producing booklets and training 200+ instructors, many of whom had no formal schooling
- Member of the team which translated the Bible into the Huli language
- PhD *How People in Traditionally Oral Society Read Vernacular Bible.*
(Case Study of the Huli)



The Conference Theme

Sustaining Melanesia's Linguistic Heritage

- Although papers were invited from a wide range of perspectives in keeping with the theme and the *International Decade of Indigenous Languages*
- It seems more appropriate to focus on indigenous language survival and/or revitalization
- Most analyses of languages are in the paradigms of structural linguistics, and, while useful knowledge *per se*, contribute little towards maintaining language use. This paper investigates the possibilities inherent in 'language policy' to attain that goal



Where this talk is headed

- Language as part of culture
understanding Spolksky's "policy"
- Historical examples of language revivals
and an analysis of possible causes
- The Huli language use in social and historical setting
fluctuating (mis)fortunes and possible "maintenance"

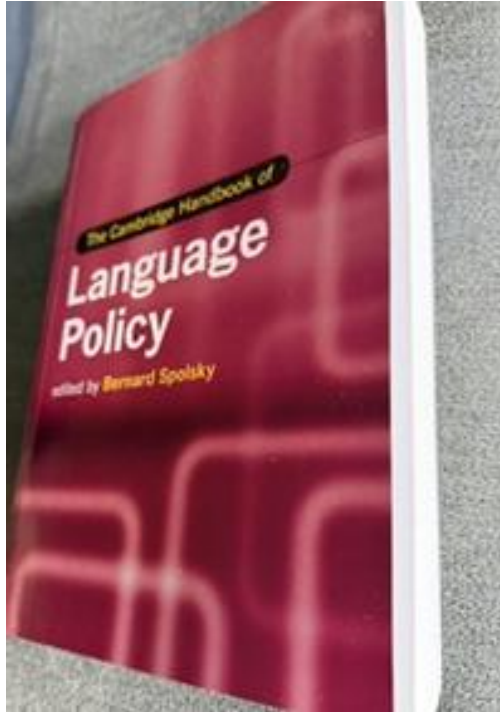


Language as part of culture

- Kraft quote: “Language reflects culture at every point”
- Cultural (social) anthropology
- Culture – idea in the mind
- Worldview – the way individuals in the group perceive all that is, including the self as part of all the “out there”
- Deep-level Components include: values; a sense of what is acceptable and not acceptable (behaviour); allegiances
- Linguist who has understood this connection with culture:
Prof emeritus Bernard Spolsky



Bernard Spolsky



Born in New Zealand; Taught in New Zealand and Australia

Professor at Bar Ilan University, Israel

Concern and wrote about “Language Management”

Came to prefer the term “Language Policy”

Edited *The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy*
738 pages; 47 contributors / 30 articles



Spolsky's Three Components

- Policy imposed by an (external) authority
(the one we usually think of)
- Two policy components by the language-speaking community
 - (1) Value of the Language
 - (2) Manner of Language Use
- Attributes of these components
 - (1) not explicit (i.e. implicit)
 - (2) not written



1. Policy imposed by an (external) authority

- Only successful if the two implied components of policy of the language speakers support it.
- e.g. the failure of the Elementary Schools experiment in PNG's 'Education Reform' (1995-2014)
- Though it could have been otherwise



Implicit policies #2 & #3 as subconsciously understood by the speakers of a language

- In the Melanesian context
- Determines which language is used in which social context
- But also what type of the vernacular is used within the language-speaking community
- These subconscious cognitive ‘policies’ guide, but do not control the speakers/users (road rules do not guarantee drivers will adhere)
- these policies are not static, and may be changed by input from “influencers” in the language group.
- At times, unfortunately, change because of misinformation.



Two Examples of Language Revitalisation / Renewal

- **Hebrew**

- Probably a *unique* example “raised from the dead”
- Conviction and untiring efforts of Eliezer ben Yehuda
- 50 years (two generations)
- Today the national language of Israel

- **Maori**

- Not near extinction BUT
- Resurgence to status of major use in the 20th century
- Many people bi-lingual; and *pakeha* learning the language
- Extensive literature
- In schools



Contrasting Examples

- **Welsh – a Gaelic language**
 - (A third example of revitalization)
 - Widespread revitalisation in 18th century
 - Particularly focused on literacy
 - Resurgence of vitality in the 20th Century (owing to policy)
- **Scottish Gaelic**
 - same linguistic family as Welsh – i.e Gaelic
 - but no widespread revitalisation



Comments on the Contrasting Examples

- Yet to analyse - why the differential outcomes?
 - Demographics of society?
 - Identity?
 - Enthusiastic visionary?
- Both
 - Had speakers of the language
 - English used in schools
- Neither
 - Relied on Government / Educational Policy



The Huli Language Hela Province

Research
&
Observations



Overview

- **Hela province – provincial capital Tari**
- **Language: branch of the Proto-Engan**
- **Linguistic analysis: 1954 by Rule & Rule**
- **400,000 speakers (projection from 2011 small area census data)**
- **85-90% of Primary students Huli is the Home Language**
- **% Literate in Huli Language: not known**



Questions about Literacy

- Self-assessment is invalid
- National % of literates needs explanation
i.e. (1) in which language?
(2) degree of literacy skill
- It may be questionable whether literacy *per se* is a necessary
'causative' component in language vitality / renewal



Textuality

- The term assumes the use of “*written* text”
- In terms of the two subconscious elements of Spolsky’s policy
 - What value/priority is assigned to written text vis a vis oral text?
 - And consequently what authority is assigned to such?
- Rutherford, (2000 article) “The White Edge of the Margin: Textuality and Authority in Biak, Irian Jaya” says “(foreign) . . .books are considered a crucial source of authority” [even when translated]
- Contrarywise, the Huli do not place importance/authority of text, e.g.,
 - Constitution
 - Reports



Literate vs Literary

- Being literate, by itself, is **not** sufficient for language maintenance
- Being literary (produce and use written literature) **is** required.

Historical evidence:

- Hebrew
 - Maori
 - Welsh
- In Huli, there are at least 50 items (booklets) – apart from the Scriptures – but nothing generated by indigenous authors.



Oral Literature?

- A contradiction, an oxymoron, misnomer? Oral genres?
- Described by Ruth Finnegan in 1996 in the *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*. Mainly focused on African oral performance.
- used by anthropologists to refer to unwritten / oral forms regarded as possessing literary qualities - brought into wider currency by the Chadwicks in their three volume work (1932) *The Growth of Literature*
- Assuming this definition to be true of indigenous languages in Melanesia, now lost due to Western-type schooling.



The Place and Role of Schools

- Education: formal, non-formal, informal
- Introducing **Dr Nancy Hornberger**
Dr. Hornberger is a former editor of the international *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* and of the ten-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (2nd edition, Springer, 2008). Since 1995, she has served as co-editor of the international book series on [*Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*](#) (Multilingual Matters), which has surpassed 100 published books
- Dr. Hornberger is working on *Multilingual Language Policy and Classroom Practice: Comparative Perspectives on Indigenous Language Revitalization*, a series of case studies based on ethnographic research in Bolivia and short-term ethnographic monitoring consultancies and classroom observations in Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, China, and elsewhere



Nancy Hornberger (2008)

Can Schools Save Indigenous Languages? Policy and Practice on Four Continents

- We recognize that **schools *alone* are not enough** to do the job.
- Indigenous language revitalization always occurs within an ecology of languages, in a context of other local and global languages with their relative statuses and uses in domains and social fields such as employment, religion, government, cultural life, media, and others. Indigenous language revitalization is subject to the vagaries of policy, politics, and power; and it is subject to the economics of the linguistic marketplace.
- Nevertheless, schools do have **an inevitable and important role** to play and it is this role that we explore [in this book]



Huli Language Literacy Classes

- 1970s-80s huge push for Huli literacy
 - Adult classes
 - Pre-school classes
- Non-formal
- Two part programme
 - Mechanics (phonics)
 - Advanced (included comprehension exercises; creative writing)
- Decline
 - Under indigenous management – Part B excised
 - Introduction of Elementary (Educational Reform) pre-school classes abandoned,



The Three-Language Tension

Vernacular, Tok Pisin, English

- Huli language in the non-endangered category
- One indicator: Huli literature available (including Bible)
- BUT no consideration given to number of Huli who are literate in Huli
- Nor how much literature was produced by Huli themselves - zero
- And although currently still the dominant spoken language in Hela Province,
it is under pressure from Pidgin and English.



Observation #1 - research School Children

- A decade ago I presented at the 2016 Linguistics Conference results of research conducted at two Primary Schools in the Huli language area.
- Over 400 students (grades 5-8) gave their individual responses connected to language preferences and difficulties.
- Not objective – respondents' 'perceptions'
- I presented some of the analysed results in a select group of nine tables.
- Two of those tables are reproduced below.



Explaining Abbreviations of The Tabulated Results

- The two primary schools (DE and TE)
- The three languages: E (English), H (Huli), P (Pidgin)
- The order E H P is simply because the computer sorted alphabetically.
- The results of the two schools are written in separate columns for comparison
- The numbers are percentages without the % symbol



Language most difficult to read



	DE	TE
E	66	81
H	27	11
P	8	8



Language most difficult to write

	DE	TE
E	58	83
H	29	8
P	13	9



Observation #2a - participant Social Media (WhatsApp)

- I am a member of two WhatsApp chat groups.
- Mostly in English
- Often “copy and paste” from other sources
- Occasionally a Bible verse in Huli (copy and paste)
- Sometimes a notification “*tok save*” – not in Huli,
BUT resort to oral recording.
- Video clip with commentary in Huli



Participant Observation #2b

- Huli farm workers in Australia (under the PALM scheme)
- Meet weekly
- Appreciation of our using the Huli language
- **But** no sense of need of textuality
- Use of smart phones
- Acknowledgement that use of Huli is declining → will die out



What we learn from the dynamics of Reviving Languages

- Importance of “influencers” /opinion leaders
- Identity (ethnic / religious)
- Literature and speakers who are not just literate but produce literature



Possible Huli influencers – the men at the top?

- Prime Minister **James Marape**
- Hela Provincial Governor **Philip Undialu**
- ECPNG National President Rev **Hengebe Himugu**
- ECPNG Hela Provincial Leader Rev **Olene Yawai**



Not Dependent on Political Leaders

- Well, not **solely**
- Whether Church or State
- To borrow and adapt Hornberger on schools, applied to leaders
They can't do it **alone**
But they do have **an inevitable and important role**



But who has **convincing** influence?

- Outsiders or insiders?
 - Outsiders through Insiders?
- Tenacity to see it through
- Examples in History have been given
- An insider and a political leader such as Wilberforce

