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From language documentation to language planning: Not necessarily a direct route[1]

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In this paper I will consider how documentary linguists can provide support for community language planning initiatives, and I will discuss some issues. These relate partly to the process of language documentation: what and who we choose to document, how we define 'a language', and how we deal with language variation and change; and partly to community attitudes and dynamics.

1. INTRODUCTION. In documentary linguistics it is often thought that it is a relatively simple matter to produce materials for use by communities, such as dictionaries and storybooks, from documentary corpora. And indeed it may be a relatively simple procedure technically, given familiarity with multimedia software. But the process of negotiating which materials should be published, for what purposes and how, involves issues of language planning which are not necessarily straightforward. Moreover, the word 'community' is frequently used over-simplistically in the field of language documentation: it is important to realize that communities are not monolithic.

Language policy and planning are in turn relevant to language documentation. Language endangerment cannot be separated from its social, cultural and political causes and effects, although some linguists (e.g. Newman 2003) would like to do so. Yet linguists' very presence in a speech community may affect language attitudes and patterns of use: e.g. studying and transcribing endangered languages demonstrates that they can be learnt and written, if writing is valued and desired by community members. The process of establishing writing systems and standards is another issue which is fraught with social, cultural and political ramifications (Hinton 2003, Sebba 2007, Marquis & Sallabank 2009).

Linguists may be called on to advise or help with language planning, whether or not we are knowledgeable about potential issues and pitfalls. An 'international expert' may be invited to advise regional or national authorities on language policy. But documentary linguists are most often involved with language planning at community level as that is the level at which fieldwork is conducted.

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2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE PLANNING. Language planning can be defined broadly as comprising any decisions or actions that affect language use, e.g. punctuation, language shift, or the choice of an (inter)national language. Language policy and planning are often conflated; along with Schiffman (1996), Hornberger (2006) and John Walsh (personal communication, November 2008), this paper views language *planning* as concrete actions or measures to implement *policies*, which are defined as decisions, positions and principles regarding language, its nature and role.

Language policies are likely to reflect prevailing language ideologies. Because some aspects of language are commonly held to be iconic (emblematic) of some aspects of identity, language policy and planning may arouse strong feelings. This paper discusses some problems with regard to the use of language documentation in language planning which may arise from ideologies and perceptions – both those of linguists and those of community members. Ideologies and perceptions also affect polices at governmental level of course, but this paper focuses on community-level language planning.

Small-scale, local, grass-roots actions in support of endangered languages are frequently characterized by more enthusiasm than planning and thus may reflect what Baldauf (1993) calls 'unplanned language planning'. They are less frequently studied or reported in the academic literature than large-scale programs or national and international policies.

Language planning falls into two main categories (Kloss 1969, Cooper 1989, Kaplan & Baldauf 1997):

- Actions to define or modify a language itself

- Actions to modify *attitudes* towards a language, or its *status* in a language ecology.

The most obvious area in which documentary materials and linguists have a role to play is in the description of a language, which is necessary for *corpus planning*: the codification, graphization, orthography, standardization of a language, as well as terminology development. Documentary materials can provide evidence-based corpora for the production of dictionaries, grammars and language learning materials. Although we wish to document and analyze the rich variations encountered among speakers, in practice it is difficult not to identify one variant as the reference model in both corpora and materials aimed at speakers. Linguists thus contribute to defining languages, and which varieties become canonical or standard, which in many cases has political ramifications.

It can be argued that documentation is necessary for *language-in-education* (or *acquisition*) planning (though as will be seen below, this does not always happen in practice). Education is the largest arena for language policy and planning, and includes medium of education, immersion, which languages are taught as school subjects, teacher training, etc. But language acquisition planning can also be carried out in less formal and more community-based ways, e.g. the master (or mentor)-apprentice programs described by Hinton (1997) and Hinton et al. (2002). Language acquisition planning may be seen as involving both corpus planning and status planning, which encompasses attempts to expand the domains in which a language is used, attempts to secure official recognition, etc.

The 'last but not least' element of language planning is *prestige planning*. This term was introduced by Haarmann (1984, 1990) to differentiate activities aimed at promoting a positive view of a language from those concerned with political status or functions: 'Not

only the content of planning activities is important but also the acceptance or rejection of planning efforts' (Haarmann 1990: 105). This stage is frequently omitted but it is essential for success: all too often measures omit to foster positive attitudes towards multilingualism, linguistic diversity, or a particular language (Fennell 1981, Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998). For example, Grenoble & Whaley (2006) argue that Soviet language policy, while ostensibly supporting minority languages, led to Siberian peoples becoming passive recipients of language planning rather than active participants, and thus to lack of enthusiasm for revitalization projects.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE PLANNING FOR DOCUMENTARY LINGUISTICS. If one aim of language documentation is for materials to be available for use in language planning and revitalization, it is necessary to plan for language planning when planning documentation. However, the types of linguistic events that are documented often still reflect traditional anthropological preoccupations by focusing on rituals, narratives and stories, and sometimes songs. Cultural information such as crafts and recipes may be collected, which may well be of use in future learning materials. But all too frequently interactive and child-oriented language is omitted from the documentary record. Stoll & Bickel (this volume) provide an example of child language in language documentation; however, in our project to document the indigenous language of Guernsey (Channel Islands) the youngest native speaker is 44 at the time of writing, and as part and parcel of the loss of intergenerational transmission, very few older speakers have experience of bringing up their children through Guernesiais. We have nevertheless made efforts to elicit child-rearing language, lullabies etc., e.g. I recently interviewed the second youngest native speaker and his mother together. As well as documenting traditional activities such as making crab pots, in our documentation we have made particular efforts to bring speakers together for conversations, discussions and staged events such as a traditional card game which elicited a number of swear words, another genre often omitted from the documentary record.

When planning language documentation linguists also need to consider such issues as what the materials will be used for, and who will use them (current speakers? their descendants? unrelated people?). As Holton (this volume) shows, not all potential future users and uses can be foreseen, which underlines the need for a broad corpus. For community-based planning to be possible, archives need to be locally available and accessible, bearing in mind that due to lack of resources or age, by no means all potential users of the materials will be internet users. So it is important to ascertain whether potential users make use of digital resources; and whether they (will) know how to access ELAN files or XML, for which a further level of technical skill is required. If community members do not have such access or expertise but are literate, a language documentation project needs to provide printed materials in addition to digital. In our case, consultants often have audio CD players but not computers, so we provide CDs of recordings. Mosel (this volume) gives an example of educational materials created as part of language documentation.

Documentary records need to provide resources for a variety of language planning activities, from formal lessons (a common first step in revitalization movements) to the re-establishment of intergenerational transmission. In many cases, language endangerment is not addressed until maintenance is no longer possible – in the words of Joni Mitchell, "you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone". The most important role of archived language

material may therefore be as a 'fall-back' in case there is later desire for revival, as is happening in Europe, America and Australia even 200 years after the 'last speakers'. For example, in the Isle of Man (in the Irish Sea) a group of young parents learned Manx and used it as their primary medium of socialization and child-rearing about 20 years after the death of the last traditional speaker – a remarkably successful ongoing revival which would not have been possible without adequate documentation. They then lobbied successfully for Manx-medium education provision.

It is well known that such a variety of potential users and uses necessitates 'a record of a language which leaves nothing to be desired by later generations wanting to explore whatever aspect of the language they are interested in' (Himmelmann 2006: 7, Woodbury 2003). But what is 'representative'? What and whose language practices (and idea of language) do documentary linguists represent – and who decides? As will be seen below, community-based language planning is situated in community dynamics, which need to be taken into account when deciding how we define a language itself, a 'language community', who counts as a community member, who 'owns' a language, and who gets to decide language policy.

4. SOME POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO THE USE OF DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS IN LANGUAGE PLANNING. Language maintenance and revitalization are often grass-roots initiatives, and it is at this level that documentary linguists are best placed to provide support since they work directly with speakers. But in community-led language planning, documentary evidence may not necessarily be appreciated, believed, or taken on board.

Language practices as observed and documented by linguists may not match how community members perceive their own linguistic behavior – or how they would prefer their language practices to be seen. Documentation which demonstrates low vitality, attrition, variation and change may be seen as promoting 'decline'. As noted by Dorian (2009), people who are viewed by the community as 'good speakers' may be highly rated for e.g. their skill in verbal arts or storytelling rather than for their knowledge of verb paradigms or rarely-used structures. Community members may see themselves as 'native speakers' (or 'language owners') without actually speaking the language well (Evans 2001). In my research into Guernesiais, the indigenous language of Guernsey, Channel islands, I have found that people who grew up hearing the traditional language may think of themselves as native speakers and therefore as fluent; but they may not use the language actively, so their production is affected by attrition (Sallabank 2010). Even if they do use the language regularly, and appear superficially fluent, they may rely on a relatively small range of formulaic constructions. Pointing out such deficiencies may not be welcome to people who are considered to be 'expert users' by their community. Grenoble (2010) recounted being accused of trying to trick consultants into making errors by trying to elicit structures and lexis outside their 'comfort zone'.

When it comes to language description, some community members may prefer 'folk linguistic' perceptions (Niedzielski & Preston 2000) or purism to documentary evidence. Like many endangered languages, Guernesiais does not have a prestige or standard dialect. Regional variation is a key feature, with a core set of iconic variables frequently cited by consultants as both valued but also as barriers to developing orthography or school curricula. However, the variation that we have found in our documentation is both more pervasive

and more complex than expected: it is not only region- and age-related, but idiolectal and related to language contact, change and attrition processes. In many cases it challenges the generally accepted regional stereotypes.

With regard to language change, we have found pervasive simplification of morphology, e.g. a reduction in verb paradigms, in many cases to just two forms without distinction between singular and plural in the first and third persons[2]:

mawjai (eat)	*mɔʒaj*	*mɔʒ*	
inf.	(2p. pl present indic.)	(all other persons)	

di (say)	*dizaj*	*diz* or *di*	*di*
inf.	(2p. pl present indic.)	(3p. pl present indic.)	(all other persons)

We have also found over-generalizations, e.g. of plural forms, and numerous features such as calques which reflect contact with English (now the main language of Guernsey), for example *nou bailli a hao* (literally 'we gave up', used for 'we retired'). We have also encountered hypercorrection and 'purism', which in Guernsey may manifest itself as convergence towards French, to which Guernesiais was formerly subaltern in a diglossic relationship, and which retains high prestige.

Such trends are typical of endangered languages (Trudgill 1983, Nettle & Romaine 2000). The dilemma for documentary linguists and language planners alike is which of these forms, if any, should form part of a 'definitive record' of a language? And which, if any, should be included in reference, learning and teaching materials? When raising such issues in Guernsey we have met with quite negative reactions from some factions in the community. There is a certain amount of unwillingness to accept the fact or inevitability of language change. It is not uncommon to hear claims that Guernesiais has not changed since the 12th century: 'We speak the language of William the Conqueror'. Many older community members (of all levels of language proficiency) have a genuine nostalgic attachment to the traditional language they heard in their youth. This may become associated with a 'discourse of the past' and an unwillingness to 'hand over' Guernesiais to new users: 'They're going to change the language to teach it – it won't be the Guernsey French we know'. There is also unwillingness to create new terminology, or to accept the need for it: '*Ya paa de naom, véyou, pour riae k'ei modern* (There aren't words, you see, for anything modern)'. In some cases this has led to denial of the need for documentation, rationalized by stating that 'there are still speakers' (although Guernesiais is not being transmitted to children) and 'it's being taught in schools' (although Guernesiais is not part of the school curriculum, so lessons are extra-curricular and taught by untrained volunteers for 30 minutes a week).

Yet despite such sentiments, some semi-speakers and a growing number of adult learners express a need for materials. Language activists may feel that language revitalization is so urgent that they may not want to wait for recordings to be transcribed, described and analyzed. So materials may be produced which are not based on a documentary corpus but on the intuitions of the 'good speakers' described above. Such materials may have prestige but may portray the language as it is perceived rather than how it is used according

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[2] Abbreviations: 2p., 3p. – 2nd, 3rd person; pl – plural; indic. – indicative; inf. – infinitive.

to documentary evidence. Yet it may be claimed that further materials are not necessary (especially if corpus-based materials might challenge the 'correctness' of earlier ones).

The production of reference and learning materials for Guernesiais is also hampered by the lack of an agreed orthography, discussion of which can generate heated debates. Preferences in orthographic systems are related to purpose, but also to language ideologies. Linguists tend to prefer orthography to reflect the phonemic inventory of a language. 'Traditionalists' may prefer 'iconic' or prestige orthographies, which in Guernsey reflect the former diglossic High language, French. Language activists may want to promote *Ausbau* (Kloss 1967) in order to differentiate their language from a dominant or related one. Learners, meanwhile, need systematic, transparent spelling and would prefer a system which helps them learn – which might reflect pronunciation, etymology or morphology depending on circumstances. The resolution of such issues often does not depend on impartial assessment of which orthography is the most efficient, but on community dynamics which may be fluid and not immediately obvious to outsiders.

5. CONCLUSIONS. It is important to think about who belongs to a 'community' and which members are empowered to make decisions on language policy. Linguists often seek the collaboration of elders and traditional community leaders. But when planning the future of a language, the views of other stakeholders may be equally valid: e.g. semi-speakers, learners and heritage speakers, who are often key actors in language revitalization; and language activists and supporters, who may not learn or speak the language at all. A well-designed linguistic corpus can generate materials for a number of purposes and audiences, but given that there are usually financial and time constraints, the issue of priorities and who decides them remains.

More research is needed into how language documentation can contribute to effective language planning. Ideally, documentation would support rational decision-making by providing a corpus which demonstrates the current situation and shape of the language. But as seen above, this is not always straightforward. Given that language documentation and language planning may be taking place simultaneously, arguably part of the task of language documentation is to document the process of language planning itself in order to provide a corpus of experiences that other researchers and communities can draw on. Language planning is situated in community dynamics and is mediated by stereotypes, perceptions, personalities, vested interests and ideologies, which themselves need to be documented in order to investigate how language planning might be made more effective. Linguists and sociolinguists also need to find ways to communicate their findings effectively so that they can provide adequate advice and resources when required by language planners.

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