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Planning Language, Planning Inequality

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Planning Language, Planning Inequality

Tollefson, James. (1991)

New York: Longman. Pp. 234

Introduction

Current and past (im)migration patterns have contributed to the increasing linguistic and investment of financial and human resources invested in language minority education, the modern societies. James Tollefson, in his book *Planning Language, Planning Inequality*, at constraints which have been created by dominant groups to prevent linguistic minorities from this way inequalities between minority and majority groups are maintained. This is the start out to show how language policy can maintain unequal social structures in a society.

An Historical-Structural Approach to Language Policy

The book begins by defining the conceptual framework of an historical-structural approach approach differs from more conventional approaches (in Tollefson's book referred to as an analysis, the role of history, the criteria used for evaluation, and the role of the social sciences).

Neo-classical approaches explain human behavior rational choices humans make based on alternatives to reach a particular goal. Criteria for the evaluation of a particular policy then by the chosen policy. The social scientist is perceived as an outsider who can objectively witness and not incorporate the role of historical processes.

In contrast, historical-structural approaches look at the social structures (class), which put Historical and structural processes shape human behavior and therefore issues of power and social structure (class) play a crucial role in the analysis of policies. Policies are evaluated based on structure. Since all human beings are treated as part of a larger social structure, the social scientist is a subjective participant.

Given these differences in assumptions, it is not surprising that the two paradigms approach conventional definitions of language planning [-1-] as the conscious efforts to affect the state of language policy as language planning by governments (p.16) for not incorporating the ideological historical-structural processes that shape language and language policy. Instead, he argues the institutionalization of language as a basis for distinctions among social groups (classes) (p.16) policy in education is structures unequal social and economic relationships.

The case studies of seven countries, presented in the following chapters, explain the role of language policies and explore the ideological underpinnings that legitimate these policies.

Language Policy, Ideology, And Power

Chapters 3 through 7 deal with language policies in Britain, Iran, China, the United States, and chapter 8 discusses the implications of the historical-structural approach for research and is introduced by a dilemma of language choice for a particular individual. Media examples, case studies, and for further readings end each chapter.

Two national policy reports dealing with the school failure of linguistic minority students in the United States deals with the role of mother-tongue education (the Swann Report), the other with teaching and addressing the lack of school success of minority students. Teachers attitudes and student failure, and teacher training and curriculum change are therefore proposed to restructure teaching. The reports analyses are reinforced by accommodation theory, which explains language accommodation and ethnolinguistic vitality. As a result of this viewpoint, Tollefson argues for fundamentally change existing inequalities. By requiring standard English, schools create linguistic barriers. Standard English is not an arbitrarily chosen standard, but represents the dominant language of a particular class of pupils an advantage. If schools do not provide the necessary language education (language education) to break down the linguistic barriers, social inequalities will continue.

Iran and China are two case studies illustrating the limitations of the interpretation of English. Tollefson, this view does not take the [-2-] power relationships between rich and poor nations. English as the language of scientific knowledge has forced many nations to develop a computer proficiency, and computer skills to access this knowledge base. However, not all nations can overcome the resulting lack of English skills becomes a barrier to the economic and political development.

In Iran, the importance attached to English on the global market, and by a political leader to the importation of foreign experts in English. English became an important language in the curriculum. The political shift to the conservative Islamic party under Khomeiny changed this positive view depicted as the cause for the demoralization and failure of the Iranian population. Consequently, English became a school subject, and many foreign experts were expatriated. A similar situation occurred in China of fear of the influence of Western values and capitalist life styles, as opposed to the communist ideology.

The clearest example of the linguistic paradox is perhaps reflected in the quality of English spoken by Chinese adult refugees who have recently arrived in the United States. The rationale behind the English language program allow the refugees to find a decent job, and to escape poverty. The irony is that the content of the program is limited to basic skills, and does not address the social and political needs of these people. Consequently, the refugees are left with English (English is required) or fight the system (since they lack the knowledge), and therefore remain in a state of limbo. Although the importance of English is recognized by the authorities, no effective provision is made to improve their proficiency. Tollefson also discusses the English-Only movement, which he presents as another barrier to political, social, and economic participation.

Tollefson chooses the Philippines, previously an American colony, to show the relationship between language and power. In the Philippines, English has a high status as the official language of the country. It is the language for higher-level jobs. Pilipino, one of the major national languages, has been proposed by the government as the official language. Neo-classical explanations describe this conflict in terms of the instrumental and symbolic/integrative value of Pilipino. However, this avoids looking at the social class issues. The current policy, [-3-] which promotes English and does not officially recognize the national language, gives the English-speaking elite an advantage, while at the same time maintaining linguistic barriers to education for those who speak a language other than English. Thus, the struggle between the languages is therefore one aspect of a struggle for power. English and Pilipino serving the aims of fundamentally different groups (p.148).

A strategy for reducing hegemonic domination by privileged groups is the assertion of language rights. Australia has opted for supporting multiculturalism and recognizing language rights. Early in the 1980s, the Senate Committee Report on National Language Policy, (1984) still identified characteristic of a language problem, but did not provide any support for English as a Second Language program. The report addressed issues of social justice and universal English language learning. While recognizing the importance of social justice, it considered mother-tongue education a necessary means to reach this goal. The relationship between inequality and education. Some consider education the cause for social inequality.

these inequalities. For example, the traditional culture contact theory assumes that teaching will enhance tolerance. Within the historical-structural approach, on the other hand, education is seen as a system and structure. Solutions should therefore be directed outside the educational system and its processes.

Yugoslavia supports a policy of regional autonomy for different language groups. These led to decentralization and the successful solution to inter-republic conflict. Tito's death and the rise of the politics of Serbian nationalism led by Slobodan Milosevic. The result was that, despite the policy of language rights, the policy of language rights was undermined. These developments demonstrated a struggle for power.

The last chapter deals with the implications of the historical-structural approach for relevant research (qualitative research) in language policy theory, and argues for language as a human right.

Tollefson's Contribution to Language Policy Theory

Tollefson's book deals with some of the limitations of neoclassical approaches to language policy. It introduces a relatively new [-4-] dimension to the field: the ideological assumption of social inequality. Tollefson is able to move the discussion beyond the realm of traditional applied linguistics by emphasizing the need to embed a policy in its social and political context. He raises questions about the influence of ideology on planned attempts to change language, and the role of language as an identifying characteristic of a group (pp. 37, 38).

In addition, Tollefson advocates for a change in research methodology and the way the social sciences approach language. He emphasizes qualitative research methodology, which is represented in his own case study approach. Through the human side of language, the individual case studies of language choices powerfully illustrate the contribution qualitative research can make to the field of language policy.

An Historical-structural Analysis of Language Policy: A Critique

Throughout the book, Tollefson contrasts the historical-structural approach with the neoclassical approach. The neoclassical descriptions are followed by a neoclassical interpretation and an historical-structural critique. Tollefson's analysis.

First, the emphasis is now on the shortcomings of the traditional approach rather than on the strengths of the historical-structural framework. The reader has to gather the implications of the historical-structural approach. A more direct application of the theoretical concepts would have strengthened the case for the historical-structural approach itself.

Secondly, Tollefson focuses almost exclusively on the differences between the two levels of analysis, creating the feeling that the two are mutually exclusive and cannot contribute to each other. If, as is defensible, justice is not done to the importance of the interaction between human agency and structure, which action produces and which give actions their meaning (p.13), when the main focus is on structure. Although Tollefson defines the purpose of language planning theory as being to explain human behavior within its constraints (p.202), his analysis is clearly biased towards the latter dimension and the two levels of analysis.

A second point of criticism is the way the meaning and content [-5-] of some of the concepts in the main thesis regarding the neoclassical approach centers around its a-historical and a-structural nature. The lack of historical-structural processes is therefore crucial to develop his argument. Tollefson omits to discuss the countrys role in the international division of labor; the countrys level of socioeconomic development; and the role of language in broader social policy (p.33). It is unfortunate that he then discusses historical processes in the case studies. For example, the case study of Britain does not include issues such as changing migration patterns, or the role of language in social policy. As a result, the term historical-structural, employed throughout the book, remains vague.

Similarly, social class is introduced as an important structural category: the issues are not discussed in education along class lines generally (p.57). Reference is made to the relationship between the low socioeconomic status of the Indo-Chinese refugees in the United States, and the social policy, but the role of social class and its complex relationship with language and education (Cummins, 1981) is sidestepped in the analysis.

The vagueness in the explanation and application of the theoretical concepts will make the historical-structural approach to human behavior.

The Case Studies

The case studies provide a two-level view on language policy: from a national and an individual level. In each of the chapters take an historical perspective and underscore the importance of qualitative analysis. In the book, the case studies form a good starting-point for further research.

One of the main shortcomings of the case studies is the absence of data on the implementation of language policy. Tollefsons analysis still heavily depends on persuasive arguments rather than empirical evidence. The assumptions of the historical-structural approach need to be developed, looking at the effects of language policy on societies.

The case studies also illustrate two other aspects not addressed in the context of the book: the dominant versus subordinate group, the historical-structural approach tends to generalize from simple language situations only. As a result, differences among minority groups

part of the analysis. For example, although many other indigenous languages exist in the I these languages except by stating that there remains the question of the status of indigenc African countries, it seems that the analysis will not adequately address the multilingual co assumes similar patterns among minority groups. Ogbu (1987), however, shows that ethn He finds, for instance, that Asians do well academically in Britain and the United States, w students consistently appear to fail in schools. He explains this variation in terms of the sta secondary cultural characteristics of the groups. To address these issues, case studies nee among language minority groups in multilingual contexts, as well as variation within grou

Implications of the Historical-Structural Approach

Tollefson's historical-structural analysis points to new avenues in research and the import structure in the analysis of language policy. He is less clear on the practical consequences in education as well as in the work place need to be granted. This, however, is not based o how language barriers can exclude linguistic minorities from full participation, they do no language rights. In addition, Tollefson calls for structural transformation (p.37), but provic should occur. It will not be through education, since the educational system is largely irrel economic fate of people who do not speak English (p.184). The question then becomes ho linguistic minorities can be influenced. The absence of a discussion of practical implicatio feeling in terms of what the historical-structural approach has to offer for policy reform, o

Conclusion

Despite the criticisms on Tollefson's book, it is important to recognize the crucial contribu raises fundamental theoretical questions with far-reaching implications. The book provid applied linguistics course, if background [-7-] knowledge on social organizational theory i contribution to language policy theory by showing the importance of the historical-structu approach is a welcome change from often impersonal applied linguistic analyses.

As Tollefson's book illustrates, traditional approaches often ignore the importance of cons by institutions in society. Phenomena of intergroup and intragroup variation, however, re individual or the social structural level. The next step will be to directly test the assumptio individuals and communities, including the implementation and evaluation process of lan

By introducing issues of class, power, and ideology, asking new research questions, and u has succeeded in pointing to new avenues for researchers and policy-makers.

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