

Language Management in Contact Situations: Perspectives from Three Continents

Edited by Jiri Nekvapil and Tamah Sherman

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The research contained in this volume builds on the work of J.V. Neustupny, one of the founders of Language Management Theory (LMT). Neustupny and his colleagues used the word ‘management’ to refer to ‘behaviour toward language’, and made an important distinction between *simple* management, which goes on between individuals, and *organized* management, which is carried out by institutions or the state.

Simple language management is the sort of linguistic accommodation that takes place in conversations between speakers of contrasting proficiencies. It usually begins when a speaker deviates from the norm. The listener then notes the deviation and may also evaluate it, such as by saying, “How quaint.” When this sort of evaluation occurs, a language problem arises: “This phase is essential for LMT, for it provides a clear opportunity to define a language problem – as a negatively evaluated deviation from a norm” (p. 5). The final phase of management is the design of an adjustment, which may or may not be implemented. This broad-ranging collection of LMT research offers some fascinating insights into how bilingual people and language learners deal with such language ‘problems’ in their daily lives.

Neustupny conducted his research in Prague, Melbourne, Osaka and Tokyo, and, accordingly, the studies discussed here are set in Eastern and Central European, Japanese and Australian contexts. The book is divided into three parts featuring research that has come from each of these regions, and each of these sub-sections is reviewed below in turn.

In the first section, which focuses on behaviour toward language in East and

Central Europe, the authors take up the theme of power, both at official and personal levels. Marian Sloboda, for example, discusses the simple language management of Belarusian and Russian in Belarus. In particular, he examines attempts to promote the use of Belarusian, highlighting how the choice of Belarusian over Russian is perceived by listeners as a political one.

Next, Istvan Lanstyak and Gizella Szabomihaly outline the role of LMT in solving difficulties experienced by the minority group of Hungarian speakers in Slovakia. Lanstyak and Szabomihaly argue that bilingualism should be regarded as a valuable resource to overcome problems arising from the prevailing ideology of “one state-one language” (p.70).

Finally, in the third chapter in this section, Tamah Sherman discusses the sociocultural, communicative and linguistic norms of native English speakers in the Czech Republic. Sherman analyses how these speakers discuss their difficulties learning Czech in posts on an Internet discussion list in which they attempt to resolve language contact difficulties. Sherman summarises the issues succinctly: "Issues of power, often economic, political and cultural power associated with different languages, particularly the use of English as a hegemonic practice, are intertwined with the norms for both accommodation and politeness" (p. 94). Sherman's insights are, of course, applicable to other contexts. Native English speakers who reside in non-English speaking countries such as Japan may encounter resistance to their attempts to use the local language due to the status of English as a global *lingua franca*.

Part 2 shifts the focus to behaviour toward language in Japan, particularly in new or first contact situations. In this section, Sau Kuen Fan first discusses the host management of Japanese among young native users in contact situations. Fan distinguishes between the *language host* and the *language guest*, the former term referring to a speaker who is using her L1 and the latter to a speaker using her L2. Fan's study concerns young Japanese in the role of hosts, and guests comprising three Americans, one Vietnamese and two Chinese. Deviations by the guests and adjustments by the hosts were recorded. Interestingly, “less deviation than expected was noted” (p. 106), an observation attributed to the guests' high proficiency in Japanese. This study indicates how language choice is managed between speakers with contrasting dominance in their languages, and hence will be of particular interest to researchers of language selection.

Next, Lisa Fairbrother investigates the application of contact norms in interactions between native and non-native speakers of Japanese. Contact norms refer to conversational features which appear in native/non-native conversations but not in native/native conversations. Fairbrother analyses conversations between native Japanese

speakers and foreigners of different backgrounds, namely, Han Chinese, Japanese-Brazilians, and those she labels ‘Caucasian native English speakers’ (p. 126). Fairbrother notes deviations from the norms of conversations between members of the internal group, including sociocultural, sociolinguistic and linguistic differences. The native Japanese speakers in Fairbrother’s study had expected the non-native speakers to produce linguistic deviations more frequently than they actually did, and thus evaluated the non-native speakers positively. Fairbrother argues that this “suggests undertones of condescension and signals a power differential between the participants” (p. 147). Interestingly, the contact norms applied by native speakers to the non-native speakers differ depending on the non-native speaker’s background. The English speakers were regarded as having “the highest degree of foreignness” (p. 147) and their deviations tended to be tolerated accordingly. In contrast, the Brazilians tended to receive less tolerance for deviations. Contact norms may be viewed either positively, because native speakers can demonstrate intercultural awareness, or negatively, because they can also underestimate the non-native speakers’ linguistic and sociocultural competence.

In the third chapter in this section, Hidehiro Muraoka discusses language contact in Japan, particularly within the context of the rapid global expansion of the 1960s and 1970s. Muraoka divides contact problems resulting from foreignness into three categories: solvable problems; unsolvable problems; and problems which can be evaluated positively. Muraoka argues that as the number of foreigners in Japan has increased, multicultural coexistence has become more desired (p. 163).

The third and final section looks at behaviour toward language in Australia, especially in academic contexts. Helen Marriott begins this section by exploring how Japanese speakers residing in Australia manage the transfer of English expressions to Japanese (or what is frequently referred to as code-switching). Marriott discovers variation both in the extent of transference and in people’s attitude towards it. Some speakers in Marriott’s study defended their frequent transfer use. For example, certain participants expressed their preference for using a Japanized version of the Australian-English word for ‘kindergarten’, *kindaa*, rather than *youchien* even when speaking Japanese with other Japanese mothers. Other speakers appeared to resist the use of transfers claiming that they wanted to speak what they perceived to be “correct” Japanese. This is an important study for anyone investigating how Japanese speakers’ native language use may change to accommodate a higher frequency of transfers after living abroad, or for researchers who are interested in the individual variation in this process and how it reflects speakers’ identities.

In the next chapter, Yuko Masuda analyses Language Exchange Partnerships

(LEPs) involving Australian students of Japanese paired with Japanese learners of English. Masuda compared the word counts of both Japanese and English in these exchanges, and discovered a discrepancy between the students' perceived use of Japanese and English and the actual language practices that were taking place. This imbalance reflects the interlocutors' competing needs to speak in their respective second languages. Nevertheless, Masuda argues that LEPs enrich the opportunity for students to practise their L2 outside the language classroom.

In her chapter, Kuniko Yoshimitsu discusses the difficulties experienced by Japanese students in an Australian university. Yoshimitsu divides these students into two categories: *local* and *international* students. Local students are defined as second generation, long-term Japanese residents as well as mixed-heritage Japanese born in Australia. International students, on the other hand, were defined as those who originally came to Australia to study, even if they later took up residence. Local students were found to experience difficulties when English was not their preferred language. One such local student based her subject selections on her desire to avoid having to write essays in English. International students acknowledged that their study difficulties stemmed from inadequate English literacy and tertiary study skills (p. 211). Academic difficulties were found to be related not only to just linguistic proficiency, but also to socio-cultural competence in the academic community. Local students were able to solve these difficulties through careful subject selection, while international students were observed withdrawing from subjects, accepting underachievement, and obtaining help editing their essays. Yoshimitsu recommends improved monitoring of future international students by the university during the first year of their tertiary studies.

Finally, Hiroyuki Nemoto discusses the conflicts between target and native academic norms by documenting the experiences of six Japanese students studying at an Australian university on a yearlong academic exchange. Nemoto highlights some of the difficulties experienced by these students in attempting to learn the norms of academic discourse. In particular, he cites the case of some students who focused excessively on grammar and word count at the expense of rhetorical style, text structure and the organization of their writing (p. 231). A further difficulty occurred when one student wrote the first draft of a paper in Japanese using L1 resources and then translated it into English, producing a text which did not conform to English language norms. Nemoto describes differences between host and target academic norms pertaining to exam preparation, class participation, referencing, and rote-memorization: "the students' application of their native norms and strategies tended not to be useful as an emergency measure to manage their participation" (p. 234). Nemoto calls for universities to provide

improved support to enhance intercultural academic participation and autonomous management. This chapter is essential reading for parents of bilingual children who transfer from Japan at the tertiary level, and will also be of interest to educators in Japan preparing students for study abroad.

These discussions of language contact and management have wide applications to the study of Japanese bilingualism both in and outside Japan. Furthermore, some interesting comparisons can be made between the Japanese/English contexts and those studies set in East and Central Europe. The volume merits particular attention from scholars of language maintenance and shift, language selection, transference, and academic contact situations.

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