

SLOVENIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
LANGUAGE PLANNING THEORY

James W. Tollefson

I am pleased and honored to be asked to present a paper at this conference commemorating 400 years of the South Slavic Reformation. I regret that I am not able to attend personally to answer questions and to hear the other presentations, though I hope that my perspective will be of interest to this audience.

And what is my perspective? First of all, I do not consider myself a Slavic scholar; rather, the focus of my research is upon language planning as a field rather than upon Slavic studies. The aim of this short paper, therefore, is to shed light on language planning issues in Slovenia as seen by a language planning specialist. What makes Slovenia so interesting to language planners is that nearly all important language planning issues found anywhere in the world are present in Slovenia. While most of these issues are not unique to Slovenia, Slovenia is nevertheless a rare instance of a single policy in which simultaneously we can observe and study the dynamic interaction of most of the important economic, socio-political, and linguistic factors affecting language planning. An additional aim of my paper is to encourage the Slavists present here to educate language planning researchers to the importance of Slovenia by focusing on those language planning issues which are of interest to language planning specialists. The resulting dialogue will benefit language planning theory by bringing to the foreground an immensely important case — Slovenia — and it will benefit Slavic scholarship by shedding light on Slovenia through the fascinating prism of language planning theory.

The study of language planning — that is, the study of deliberate, future-oriented language change — assumes two crucial distinctions. The first distinction is between *status*-planning and *corpus*-planning. Status planning refers to decisions affecting relationships among language varieties, in particular decisions about domains of such as education, publishing, government, and so on. Corpus planning refers to decisions about the phonological, orthographical, and grammatical structure of a language variety. The second important distinction is between the *formulation* and the *implementation* of language policy. Formulation refers to the decision-making processes involved in both status and corpus planning. Implementation refers to all efforts to carry out formulated policies.

In Slovenia policies are formulated and implemented in both status and corpus areas, and the problems addressed by these policies have a crucial place in language planning theory.

First: Status decisions. Language problems facing Slovenia cover four important areas delineated by language planning theory. The first is the relationship between economic factors and other social and political factors in determining which language is dominant. The Slovene language is clearly the language of an economically advanced nation within Yugoslavia, but Slovenes comprise only about 8% of the total population of the country. Whether economic advantages associated with Slovene are sufficient to offset enormous demographic disadvantages is of special interest to language planning theorists who wish to find ways to maintain minority languages in other countries around the world.

The second area of status planning involves relationships among competing minority languages. In Slovenia, this means the relationship between Slovene and other languages, in particular Italian and South Slavic languages other than Slovene.

A fairly stable relationship has been established between Italian and Slovene, with Italian being relatively well protected. With the growth of the non-Slovene South Slavic population in the Republic of Slovenia from 3.33% in 1961 to 8.10% in 1981, there may be demands for some sort of official recognition of these languages in Slovenia. Use in schools, Slovene media and government, and advertising may dramatically increase the impact of these South Slavic languages on Slovene, thereby further weakening the status of Slovene in Yugoslavia. I will have more to say about this in my conclusion.

Two additional areas of status planning that are of interest to language planning specialists are efforts at international language planning and uncertainties about the status of a spoken standard. Yugoslavia and the Republic of Slovenia have had many interactions with Italy and Austria about the status of Slovenes and Slovene in those countries. A number of agreements have been signed in recent years, but the issue of Slovenes and Croats in Austria remains an explosive one. Language planning specialists will be interested in the capacity of these countries to cooperate to achieve lasting agreements. The issue of a spoken standard for Slovene has received much attention among Slavists. Of interest to language planning specialists is the impact of written standards on spoken varieties. In Slovenia, the relationship between the written and spoken standards is the focus of much linguistic research, the results of which may illuminate general theoretical formulations of the interaction between written and spoken language varieties.

Corpus planning has been going on in Slovenia for centuries, and continues in recent times in work on the *Slovenski pravopis*, in concern about borrowings from Serbo-Croatian, in questions of dialect and in

related educational issues in language teaching. All are crucial issues for language planning theory: Can planned standardization succeed? Can borrowings from a dominant language be deliberately restricted? Can an educational system incorporate a respect for dialect variability with a sincere effort to teach the standard variety, without damaging overall educational goals or individual achievement?

In Slovenia it will be important to determine the sources (planned or unplanned) of the developing standard. Planners for many years have attempted to deliberately maximize differences between Slovene and Serbo-Croatian, though these efforts are offset by the inevitable impact of the widespread use of Serbo-Croatian in the media, government, and all areas of life in Yugoslavia. Borrowings from Serbo-Croatian are likely to continue, and whether planners can reduce the impact of Serbo-Croatian on the structure of Slovene should be of enormous interest to language planning specialists. Finally, the well documented variation among dialects of Slovenia raises the most basic issues of language education. Since many Slovenes must learn a variety which differs widely from their home language in order to succeed in school, study of differential achievement based on home dialect and language syllabus would be fruitful research.

Thus far I have listed those language planning issues in Slovenia that seem especially important from the perspective of language planning theory. In a sense, this list constitutes a call for research in these areas and for determined efforts to examine the Slovene case from the perspective of language planning theory. Yet the future of Slovenia depends directly upon decisions made in these areas. With its enormous economic, social, and political problems, Yugoslavia will have to be blessed with wise and determined leaders in the years ahead. From the perspective of language planning, there is one overriding issue that will require this kind of leadership: The issue of non-Slovene South Slavic languages in Slovenia. The movement of workers from southern Yugoslavia to Slovenia has resulted in dramatic changes in the population of Slovenia, particularly in the cities of Ljubljana and Maribor. Although federal policy clearly protects the status of Slovene in Yugoslavia, economic policies which encourage guestworker movement undermine the linguistic and social stability of the Republic. In this sense, federal language policy and economic policy are in conflict. Experience suggests that progressive language policies always suffer when there is such a conflict.

And Slovenes themselves are in conflict here. Because of the subordinate position of Slovene in the country as a whole, Slovenes generally support efforts to protect minority languages, such as Italian in Slovenia. Yet protection of South Slavic languages other than Slovene, (protection justified by the fact that those languages are minority languages in Slovenia) threatens the future of Slovene. Only through wide-

spread public debate will Slovenes be able to clarify their feelings and their interests on this issue, but the current political climate makes such debate unlikely.

This issue of course cannot be separated from the broad question of the position of Slovenia and the Slovene language in Yugoslavia. Until recent population shifts, Slovene may have had a highly restricted geographical area, but at least within that area it was well protected. Thus conflict tended to be economic rather than linguistic, such as that involving additional investment in southern regions. With the increase in the non-Slovene population in Slovenia, however, Slovenes may further resist economic policies which have favored other republics. One could argue that such resistance will only increase migration into Slovenia as long as southern regions remain less developed economically. But the emotion of the linguistic question may be more powerful than the reality of its economic impact, and Slovenes may find themselves supporting policies which threaten their own language. Yet this is the bind in which Slovenes increasingly find themselves: How can they support both their economic and linguistic interests.—and those of the country of Yugoslavia? How Slovenes and the rest of Yugoslavia handle this complex inter-play between linguistic and economic policies will shed light on the crucial connections between economic and soci-political factors in language planning.

University of Washington