

Rethinking Language Policy

Professor Bernard Spolsky

Professor Emeritus

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Chair: Professor Angel M.Y. Lin

Abstract:

In Spolsky (2004), I proposed a model of language policy that consisted of three related but independent components, language practice, language beliefs and language management. I later suggested that the problem in the implementation of state policies was to be explained by the existence of language management at various levels and domains starting with the individual and the family (Spolsky, 2009). In recent studies of language policy in Portuguese (Spolsky, 2018b) and French colonies (Spolsky, 2018a) and in their successor independent states, I have learned that this model omits the non-linguistic conditions (like wars, ethnic strife and cleansing, corruption and natural disasters) that lead to changes in language repertoire or that interfere with the formation or implementation of state policies. Further, I have been persuaded of the relevance of self-management, when individuals choose to improve their own proficiency by learning a new language or modifying their own, called simple language management by Nekvapil (2006) and accommodation by Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis (1973). The expanded model permits a better understanding of the complexity of language policy and management, and difficulties of developing and implementing language policy at the state level.

About the speaker:

Educated at Wellington College and Victoria University (BA, MA, Hon Litt D), Bernard Spolsky taught at Gisborne High School, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, McGill University, Indiana University, The University of New Mexico and from 1980 at Bar-Ilan University, retiring in 2000 as Professor Emeritus. He has conducted research on language learning and testing, applied and educational linguistics and most recently language policy and management, publishing ten authored and 25 edited books and about 250 articles and chapters. He has been founding editor of three international academic journals, and is past president of International TESOL, the Israeli Association of Applied Linguistics and International Language Testing Association. He is a Fellow of the Linguistic Society of America, of the Asian Association for Language Assessment and of the Linguistic Society of India, Research Fellow in the Department of Linguistics of the University of South Africa, Lifetime Advisory Board member of the Asian Association for Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and International Advisor of the Beijing Advanced Innovation Center for Language Resources. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife, Professor emerita Ellen Spolsky, a leading scholar in the field of cognitive literary theory.

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