Li Yuming: Language Planning in China. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter and Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2015. xiii+490 pp.

This book represents Chinese scholars' recent efforts to introduce to the world the accelerating domestic development in Language Policy and Planning (hereafter referred to as LPP). It is the first volume of the De Gruyter series *Language Policies and Practices in China* with "language planning" in the title, a deviation from the three preceding descriptive volumes which were all entitled *Language Situation in China* (Li & Wei 2013, 2014, 2015). This latest collection of 30 chapters, however, aims to present to English-language readers some major normative and explorative LPP efforts in China.

The bulk of the book, Chapters 4–5 and 8–25, is generally normative. These chapters discuss how the government should handle the emerging challenges faced by China – described in Chapter 8 – the growing bilingualism and bi-dialectalism, the unplanned virtual space, the drastic change of language landscape, and the increasing international contact. The comprehensive discussion is umbrellaed by the central concept of *national language capacity* elaborated in Chapters 4–5. This capacity is understood as the language ability required for a country to handle its domestic and foreign affairs. Li believes that it has five dimensions and can be built up through efforts in five corresponding fields: foreign language education for expanding the pool of language talents (Chapter 9), standardization for upgrading the language status (Chapters 10–11, 14–16), citizen plurilingualism for coping with international competition (Chapter 12), digitalization for embracing the new technologies (Chapters 13, 18–22) and teaching Chinese as a second language to spread it overseas (Chapters 23–25). Chapter 9 addresses the lack of planning in foreign language management, and calls for more emphasis on language education, outward translation, public language service, community language service, and special linguistic domains related to national security. Chapters 10–11 and 14–16 discuss how to standardize and empower the national language by utilizing authoritative dialects, modernizing lexicography and enhancing terminology corpora. Chapter 12 proposes that bilingualism and bi-dialectalism (including plurilingualism and pluri-dialectalism) be established as norms of linguistic competence for both majority and minority ethnic groups. Chapters 13 and 18–22 discuss solutions to language digitalization in the information era. Chapters 23–25, however, focus on the spread of Chinese to overseas communities. Though considerable efforts have been made in these areas, the author is quite frank in admitting that serious problems still exist: the competition between the standard language (Putonghua) and dialects, unbalanced foreign language education, the threatened minority languages, and the weak status of Chinese internationally and in cyberspace.

The rest of the book – Chapters 1–3, 6–7 and 26–30 – has a more explorative quality in that it aims to theorize the findings or experience yielded from Chinese practices by trying to make them fit in with existing Western LPP theories. Some interesting novel ideas have emerged from this process. Chapter 1 discusses three major linguistic issues, namely, language problems, linguistic resources and language rights. A Western reader may easily find that this division corresponds exactly to the three-orientation LPP

meta-model proposed by Ruiz (1984), and this chapter does follow Ruiz by proposing linguistic resources as an ideal approach to language issues in China. However, the elaboration of the three orientations is based entirely on the Chinese situation. For example, the author argues that language should be treated as a linguistic, cultural and economic resource, which does not correspond to Ruiz's reasoning at all. This chapter serves as a good example of how Chinese scholars utilize Western theories, often localizing them for the Chinese context rather than sticking to them strictly.

Chapter 2 proposes the concepts of *mother tongue* and *mother speech*. The author claims that *mother tongue* refers to the common language of a person's ethnic group while *mother speech* can refer to any variety of that language that a person uses from childhood, such as a dialect. This division provides sub-language varieties with a status higher than before, in a form seemingly equal to a language. The recognition of *mother speech* can be seen as an attempt to ease the long-standing competition between Chinese and its large number of dialects. As is well-known, some Western scholars also play a role in this discussion by calling many Chinese dialects separate languages since they are practically mutually unintelligible. Here, defining *mother tongue* as the ethnic common language shows some traces of Soviet influence, but may cause problems in cases of dual mother tongues and null mother tongue in contemporary China, since some ethnic groups speak more than one ethnic language and some have completely shifted to Chinese.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 7 discuss the concept of *function planning*. Language function planning is said to be an extension of status planning and corpus planning, aiming to assign a specific function (status and application in a particular domain) to each form of language variety. Li proposes eight functions altogether: national language, official language, education medium, languages for mass media, public services, public communication, cultural activity, and daily communication. He also points out that five language forms in China should be considered when assigning functions: Putonghua and standard writing, minority languages, Chinese dialects, foreign languages and finally, the traditional Chinese characters. Interestingly, there are actually four kinds of Chinese varieties used in China: the standard speech Putonghua, numerous dialects sharing one writing system with Putonghua but pronounced differently, simplified writing used in mainland China as the standard, and the traditional writing mostly used in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. What complicates things is that all four kinds of varieties are actually in parallel use all over China, which makes function planning necessary indeed.

Chapter 6 explains the concept of *language life*, which refers to any language-related social activities that can be examined at the macro, meso and micro levels. Macro language life includes national and super-national-level activities; meso life means activities in separate social domains or geographical regions; and micro life is mainly about the activities of individuals or "terminal units" such as family, village, farm, factory, mine, store, hospital, train station, court, and military unit. Li offers a comprehensive framework for observing and analyzing the language life of China so that the government can manage it effectively.

Chapters 26–30 examine some early explorations conducted by pioneering Chinese scholars in a campaign called the Qieyinzi (phonetic alphabet) Movement that strived to develop a phonetic system to be used as a national common language. It began in 1892 and ended in 1911 when the Qing Dynasty collapsed, long before the establishment of the P.R. China in 1949. One point worth mentioning here is that the choice of the Beijing dialect by P.R. China as the basis for Putonghua is mainly an inheritance from the Qieyinzi Movement during which the Beijing dialect already prevailed (Chapters 29–30). Another is that labeling the local varieties of Chinese as dialects is not a new communist practice, but rather, a norm widely accepted during the Qieyinzi Movement (Ch. 26–28). Fangyan (a dialect) has been used for hundreds of years in China to refer to the different varieties of Chinese vs. the official language (Yayan or Guanhua). Investigations have covered pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, though pronunciation has received the most attention. Yet another is the Pinyin system, a Romanized phonetic transcription system now considered an initial medium for character teaching and an aid for computer input. Pinyin is actually a revised version of Qieyinzi originally designed as a new language to replace characters. Even in the early years of P.R. China, the government seriously considered adopting Pinyin as the language of education for the masses.

The dual focus on normative and explorative efforts in this book can be attributed to the author's dual identity. Li Yuming was already an established linguistics researcher before being transferred to the position of the General Director of Language Information Department of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, where he served from 2001 to 2012. The obligations of a high-level planner have driven him to think more at the macro level, and the results of such reflections are included in a three-volume book series titled *On Language Planning in China* (Li 2010a, 2010b, 2015), an extensive collection of Li's writings and talks since 2002. The 30 papers in the book were actually selected from the 114 pieces included in the series. The book shows that Chinese practitioners and researchers are making unique contributions to the development of the current LPP theoretical framework created mostly by Western researchers. The following examples may show how the West and China are linked yet misaligned.

The first is the problem-rights-resources approach to language issues, initially proposed by Ruiz in the 1980s. Chapter 1 proves that Chinese planners perceive the language situation of a country from similar perspectives as Western researchers, yet with a different emphasis. Ever since the trichotomy was suggested, the discourse of language rights has been moving towards the heart of Western policy analysis. Some scholars even state that "language rights-based policies are displacing traditional language planning" (Pupavac 2012: 24). The research conducted using the language rights approach, however, has been generally weak in China due to the fear of potential conflicts encouraged by the rights discourse. The legal context in China provides only partial support for those imported radical linguistic rights. Understandably, advocacies of protecting and utilizing language resources have permeated the mainstream discourse in China.

The second is the classic status-corpus dichotomy. Chinese planners have undoubtedly found this division useful in trying to get a macro grasp of the planning work. Chapters 10 and 11 have "status" in their titles, while Chapters 14, 15, 16, 20, 21 and 22 use corpus-related terms like *standardization* or *modernization* or terms like *lexicography*, *terminology* or *character set.* However, Chinese planners are not satisfied with the simplified categorization. They develop the dichotomy by mixing terms to create *function planning* (Chapter 3) or *field planning* (Chapters 7, 9). This may seem less original as it is actually just a detailed allocation of status for a language variety, which is close to Spolsky's *domain management* (Spolsky 2009). And as a matter of fact, status and function have long been used with overlap (Kloss 1968; Stewart 1968; Haugen 1983), even before the status-corpus dichotomy was formed. But it is interesting to notice that different varieties of a language are included in function planning in China. Li developed his principle of management that "The language situation that the government manages should be that of the higher functional domains, while help or guidance could be provided for those at the lower-end domains, with government intervention be kept to the minimal."(Li 2015: 49). A detailed down-to-earth application would prove that function planning is a genuine innovation from practice that does make sense for front-line planners, which is usually missing in Western literature.

The third is the monolingualism-multilingualism balance. Multilingualism is often considered a post-modern achievement deviating from monolingualism, aiming to preserve diverse identities in an integrating world. Multilingualism in China, however, is a desired tool for improving communication among ethnic groups who are far from being integrated linguistically. If we consider the fact that, at present, only around 70% of the population can speak Putonghua, leaving over 300 million people speaking numerous other languages or dialects (State Language Commission 2017: 1), we would realize that monolingualism was never a reality in China. China is thus not transitioning from monolingualism to multilingualism like many Western countries which implemented a common language during Industrialization and now claim to welcome diversity. China promotes multilingualism to achieve easier cross-ethnic and cross-region communication, as Europe is doing at the EU level. In addition, multilingualism in China covers the coexistence of different varieties of Chinese, not just different languages.

Meanwhile, when localizing Western theories, Chinese cases can also shed some new light on them and possibly make some new contributions. One of these is *mother speech*. Within the research on linguistic human rights, there has long been criticism of the insufficient attention to "diversity and inequality within 'language'" (Blommaert, 2001:135). And even the strongest supporters of linguistic human rights admit that "Nobody can do this today because these (intra-language) interactions have barely been researched" (Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson & Kontra 2001: 143). One manifestation of such neglect is the lack of proper terms for relevant discussion. Li's proposal of *mother speech*, however, provides a necessary and important tool for exploring intra-language equality. Most of the major Chinese dialects are learnt and used by a population bigger than most language communities in the world. These dialects have relatively clear, long-standing geographic centers. So dialects don't have to be standardized

to receive recognition, as proposed in the past (Wee 2005). The recognition of *mother speech* provides a useful notion for in-depth discussion of intra-language interplay which used to be only considered a "complementation to inter-language studies" (Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson & Kontra 2001: 143).

Another case is *language life*. It has been widely used in China for decades and taken for granted as a Chinese local term. But like many scientific terms in Chinese, it may originate from Japanese. The earliest appearance of the term *language life* in Chinese literature was in 1986. It was used by the former director of State Language Commission, Zhou Youguang, in an essay titled *My Views on Japanese Language Life* after he paid a short visit to Japan (Zhou 1986). But as early as in 1966, and around the same time of its appearance in China, *language life* was used by Japanese researchers (Hatutaro 1966; Kondo 1988). Chinese scholars likely borrowed this term from them to refer to the language situation of a country. But Chinese scholars have been continuously developing the term since 1986, mostly along the previous line of holistic description. Then, in 2006, Li tried to redefine *language life* to include any social or individual activity of language use or learning (Li 2006). And in this sense, *language life* is close to the term *language management* as "behavior towards language" (Nekvapil 2016). The relevant point here is that, in his ten-year long language planning career, Li insisted "it is language life, instead of language per se, that a government should manage", as stated in the preface (p. v). That is, language use and users should be at the center of language management. And this is likely why Bernard Spolsky, in his foreword to the volume, refers to language life as a key contribution of Li. On the whole, this term can be a contribution to the international LPP literature in that it emphasizes people-involved language use as the object of planning, with both macro and micro dimensions.

As a collection of writings published over a decade, the book does have some obvious shortcomings. The greatest problem is the lack of systematicity. The absence of an overt structure likely leaves international readers bewildered, since most of them may know little about the Chinese situation. There is also no comprehensive summary of the official ideologies underlying the planning actions in China. Furthermore, the occasional repetition of some opinions or details in different pieces could also lead to confusion. Another issue is the quality of language. The book was apparently translated by multiple translators, some likely not within the field of LPP. The translation language and occasional inaccurate use of terminology hurt the book's readability and even create barriers for comprehension.

Overall, though, the book is a good attempt to create bridges between Chinese and international researchers. If some Chinese voices are heard and some opinions even accepted, the book will have achieved at least partial success. A more comprehensive and in-depth interpretation of the Chinese language planning situation would require substantial future work.*

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