Language Planning and Language Policy in Japan

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Language planning is defined as an activity that aims at influencing the variety, characteristics, and purposes of a language used in any particular location. The prime components of language planning are corpus and status planning. In Japan, language reforms that began in the Meiji Period of the nineteenth century dealt mainly with establishing and codifying a standard language, and with written language reform. More recently, the National Language Council (Kokugo Shingikai) listed five areas of contemporary language that should subjected to language policy decisions: language usage, script, the shift to an information society, internationalization, and language education and research. This paper demonstrates that these policy decisions relate to language planning in general, and shows how each issue relates in particular to one of the various aspects of language planning. It concludes by relating language policy in Japan to policies concerning English education.

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