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The Characteristics of Language Policy and Planning

Research: An Overview

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Abstract

This chapter has been compiled to provide an overview of the language policing and planning (LPP) field, particularly for new researchers who would like to pursue their MA or PhD. It aims to explore the following: the genesis of LPP from the 1950s to date, type of research questions pertinent to the field, methodology that can be applied, substantial literature review and case studies that have been carried out in LPP, ethnography of language policy and planning, the historical analysis approach and authorities in the field of LPP such as Hornberger, Johnson and Ricento.

Keywords: language policing and planning (LPP), ethnography, research instruments, historical analysis approach

1. Introduction

Language policing and planning (LPP) is one of the fastest growing subdisciplines of applied linguistics [1]. The LPP field was formed in the early 1960s by language scholars interested in solving the language problems of new, developing and/or post-colonial nations.

As claimed by many to be the pioneer in the field of LPP, it was Haugen who introduced the term language planning in 1959. Haugen defined language planning as “the activity of preparing normative orthography, grammar and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogenous speech community” [2]. What Haugen described was later categorized as status planning [3], corpus planning [3] and acquisition planning [4].

2. The emergence of language policy and planning as a field of applied linguistics

As emphasized earlier, LPP is a new field of study which is growing rapidly but researchers have found LPP structures from the World War II era. Ricento [5] “traces the evolution of LPP research since World War II in three phases with their respective socio political, epistemological and strategic concerns.” It is argued that the 1950s–1960s was an era of decolonization and state formation during which LPP research was carried out under a structured paradigm that was oriented towards problem solving [1].

2.1. The 1950s–1960s era

The LPP field came into existence from this period and many linguists emerged to provide solutions of LPP-oriented issues in light of the colonial ruling globally. Johnson [2] argues that “during this era, many linguists were recruited to help develop grammars, writing systems and dictionaries for indigenous languages and, out of this, an interest in how best to develop the form of a languages, i.e. corpus planning grew.” Lin [6] shares her perspective on the development of LPP. She states that “language policy and planning (LPP) as an interest for academics emerged in the 1950s, and 1960s has largely been ‘problem-oriented’ that responded to the needs of the newly established states; these polities had just gained independence from their former colonial powers” [7].

It is stipulated that early researchers in LPP were technical in their approach, seeing their task as one of planning, standardizing, regulating, containing or managing linguistic diversity for the national development agendas; these would include planning for spreading a standardized national language as well as modern economic development [1]. Moreover, Hornberger and Johnson [8] claim that while early research offered various macro-level frameworks in order to account for and guide national language planning, the latest critical methodologies focus on how language policies can be hegemonic by delineating minority language education.

Finally, Johnson [2] explains why much of the earlier works in language planning has had negative feedback. “Initial language planning work has been critiqued for various reasons—as it was exclusively focused on deliberate language planning done by governing states, because the work was subjugated by a structuralist or positivistic epistemology and because the frameworks disregarded the socio-political context in which language planning takes place” [2].

2.2. The 1970s–1980s period

During the 1960s–1970s, LP was seen as a non-political, non-ideological, pragmatic and a technicist paradigm. Its overt objective was to solve the immediate language issues of the newly emergent post-colonial states in Africa, Asia as well as the Middle East. Furthermore, status language concerns at this time, thus, focused in particular on establishing stable diglossic language contexts in which majority languages (usually, ex-colonial languages and most often English and French) were promoted as public languages of wider communication [9].

On the contrary, Johnson [2] argues that “it is challenging to precisely and/or cohesively characterize the work during this period as interest became more prolix that extended beyond the corpus/status distinction, and many language planning academics began to question the practicality of previous models of language planning” (p. 30). He further explains that it was during this time whereby positivistic linguistics paradigms and structuralist concepts were increasingly being challenged among various disciplines. The critical linguistics and sociolinguistics examined previous approaches that attempted to divorce linguistic data from the sociocultural context in which it was created. Therefore, these two related, nevertheless diverse, areas of research have facilitated in shaping the LPP field [2].

Therefore, Hymes suggested that what needs to be accounted for in any acceptable theory of language users as well as language use is a speaker’s communicative competence, which takes into account not only the linguistic “competence” as defined by Chomsky but also the sociolinguistic knowledge to interact applicably in particular sociocultural contexts [2].

2.3. 1990s to current expansion of frameworks

Current developments in LPP further focus on the agency of local social actors in the policy-implementation spaces [8]. Each of these theoretical developments carries with it different methodological and epistemological stances [1].

Johnson [2] argues that the critical shift in linguistics and sociolinguistics ultimately influenced the field of language planning and overtly integrated into critical language policy in the 1990s, but prior to that, there were at least three crucial developments:

- (a) The attention moved away from “language planning” being understood exclusively as something obligatory by governing bodies to a broader focus on activity in several contexts and layers of LPP.
- (b) An increasing interest in language planning for schools, including the introduction of acquisition planning by Cooper [4] to the original status/corpus distinction.
- (c) An increased interest in the sociopolitical and ideological nature of LPP.

3. Pertinent research questions

Various questions can be derived from the issues that concern language, its maintenance and its growth. The following are the suggested research questions that researchers may take up as part of their MA or PhD curriculum.

- (a) What processes are involved in language planning and policy in a polity?

This question examines the process that is undertaken in creating a language policy in a country, society or state. Researchers can search through archival documents such as meeting proceedings, debates on the creation process as well as draft copies of the language policy.

- (b) How is a particular language policy being enacted in the schools?

This question deals with the notion that a language policy exists in a country but whether it is being enacted properly or not in schools, either in the primary or secondary sector.

c) What is the correlation between language issues of a country and its LPP?

The language issues that arise in a country could be attributed to the LPP. This question examines first, the language issues then it analyses the language policy and how it is related to the language issues.

4. Ethnography of language policy and planning

The term Ethnography can be defined as the scientific description of customs of individual people and cultures. Ethnography research plays a major role in language policy and language planning (LPP), multilingualism and language education researches (Some of the experts in the field include [2, 5, 8–12]).

One of the crucial researches in this field was carried out by Hornberger and Johnson [8], which is cited in recent LPP researches. In this article, the authors initiate the need for more multi-layered and ethnographic approaches to language policy and planning (LPP) research by emphasizing on two examples of how ethnography can irradiate local interpretation and implementation. They propose ethnographic data collected in two distinct institutions. Both of these perform as transitional agencies between national language policies and local educational initiatives [8].

Analysing from long-term ethnographic work in each context, the researchers present pieces from spoken and written discourse that bring light on the opening up or closing down of ideological and implementational spaces for multilingual language education policy as well as practice. Using examples they illustrate that ethnographic research can, figuratively speaking, slice through the layers of the LPP onion [13] to unveil agentive spaces whereby local actors implement, interpret and often resist policy initiatives in varying and exclusive ways.

Davis explains that even though critical approaches, such as the historical structural approach, provide a logical base for LPP research, it lacks a methodology for gathering data. However, she suggests that ethnography can offer a copious description of language planning within communities, schools and other social institutions. Hornberger and Johnson [8] and Canagarajah [12] add that ethnography can help build LPP models and inform policy-making.

Furthermore, Hornberger and Johnson [8] agree with Davis that ethnographies of language policy offer unique insights into the LPP processes through broad descriptions of policy interpretation and implementation at the local level. Hornberger and Johnson [8] further clarify the ideology and implementation of ethnographic researches by stating “Ethnographic language policy research offers a means for exploring how varying local interpretations, implementations, negotiations and perhaps resistance can pry open implementational and ideological spaces for multilingual language education” (p. 511).

The research instruments that were used in Johnson’s multi-sited ethnographic study between 2002 and 2005 of language policy in the School District of Philadelphia included participant observation, recorded interviews, recorded naturally occurring conversation, historical legal

analysis and textual analyses [8]. Consequently, his research used intertextual analyses to look at spoken and written discourse throughout the various layers of language policy development, interpretation and implementation.

To add on, Canagarajah [12] claims that ethnographers may supplement participant observation with surveys, questionnaires and interviews and may use audio and video taping, field notes or digital media to “capture” data. Whatever means are used, ethnographers present a broad description of concrete details and narratives in their reports, enabling readers to see language practices in all their contextuality and variability [12].

5. The historical-structural approach

A wide range of topics that can be investigated using historical-structural research methods can make it difficult for beginning researchers to decide what to include in a research plan [1]. A useful structure for establishing historical-structural study is illustrated in **Table 1**. This structure takes on the traditional divisions between the language-planning processes of status

Language planning processes	Examples of micro-level analysis (involves ‘bottom-up’ level of planning)	Examples of macro-level analysis (involves ‘top-down’ national government policies)	Examples of historical-structural factors
Status planning	Multilingual discourse practices in classrooms and schools Implicit language policies in families Translation and interpretation in the police, court and other state institutions	Monolingual ideologies of language in official policy statements Constitutional provisions for official multilingualism Political self-determination in minority-language communities	History of colonialism Linguistic imperialism Linguistic stratification in the job market The role of language in elite closure Language and national identity
Corpus planning	Codification Functional and terminological elaboration Linguistic purification programs New varieties of English and other languages of wider communication	Language documentation Multi-modal literacies The rise of new indigenous literatures	Standardization and “accountability” in education Movements for authenticity and cultural identity Ethnolinguistic nationalism
Acquisition planning	Content of curriculum, textbooks and materials Standardized testing and washback Indigenous pedagogies in schools	Movements for indigenous curriculum and pedagogies International cooperation among linguistic-rights movement	Maintenance of colonial educational systems in post-colonial states Availability of resources and influence of funding sources for textbooks, materials and teacher training Globalization and English language policy Discourse of the instrumental value of English

Note: Adapted from Tollefson [14].

Table 1. Descriptive framework of historical-structural research.

planning, corpus planning as well as acquisition planning and between micro and macro levels of analysis [14].

Corpus planning can be defined as those aspects of language planning which are primarily linguistic and, hence, internal to language [15]. Some of the example of these aspects that are related to language planning includes orthographic (the way in which words in a language are spelled) innovation, including design, harmonization, change of script and spelling reform; pronunciation; changes in language structure; vocabulary expansion; simplification of registers; style and the preparation of language material [15]. Whereas status planning is concerned with the environment in which the language is used, for example, which language is the “official language” or the “national language” of a country.

According to Donakey [16], acquisition planning is concerned with language distribution, which can involve providing opportunities to use a particular language to increase the number of users. Furthermore, Tollefson states that historical-structural factors may apply in all the planning processes at all the levels.

6. Conclusion

In a study that investigates language policy and planning (LPP), it is pivotal to comprehend what the researchers take up in their scholarship. Hult and Johnson [1] clarify this particular point by stating that LPP researchers are concerned with the creation, interpretation and appropriation of policy on language status, corpus or acquisition in particular contexts—we seek to understand, illuminate and influence policy-shaped/policy-shaping texts, discourses and practice.

Furthermore, LPP researchers often take up the “what” of language policy as it plays out in education, focusing on policy and planning around language teaching and learning or language in learning and teaching [1]. This, in turn, constitutes the fields which could be investigated, for example, policies on language learning and instructional practices in classrooms at elementary, secondary or tertiary levels; on language acquisition and use in classroom interaction; or on method of assessing what a language learner knows and can do. Hult and Johnson [1] summarize this perspective by stating that context is crucial to analysing, interpreting and generalize findings.

7. Future directions

Language planning and policy (LPP) research falls into the field of sociolinguistics which is a branch of applied linguistics. Sociolinguistics is the basic grounding needed for scholars to engage in LPP studies. The terminology that is vital or the background knowledge that is required for LPP studies can only be derived from sociolinguistics. Therefore, it is suggested that students actively involve themselves in this before engaging in LPP research.

To sum up, this chapter has outlined the characteristics of language policy and planning research, the type of questions pertinent in this field. The article has also discussed some methodology

which can be employed in conducting future studies. Moreover, those who are unfamiliar with the terminology used in the LPP field should have become acquainted with these.

Glossary

Acquisition planning	It is concerned with language distribution, which can involve providing opportunities to use a particular language to increase the number of uses
Corpus planning	It can be defined as those aspects of language planning which are primarily linguistic and, hence, internal to language [15]
Macro-level analysis	It involves 'top-down' national government policies
Micro-level analysis	It involves 'bottom-up' level of planning that includes private initiatives such as local groups
Status planning	It is concerned with the environment in which the language is used for example, which language is the "official language" of a country or the "national language". Which language should be used in schools? Which language(s) should be used in the media?

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