

Language Policy

Subhan Zein  
Maria R. Coady *Editors*

# Early Language Learning Policy in the 21st Century

An International Perspective

 Springer

# Language Policy

Volume 26

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The last half century has witnessed an explosive shift in language diversity not unlike the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, but involving now a rapid spread of global languages and an associated threat to small languages. The diffusion of global languages, the stampede towards English, the counter-pressures in the form of ethnic efforts to reverse or slow the process, the continued determination of nation-states to assert national identity through language, and, in an opposite direction, the greater tolerance shown to multilingualism and the increasing concern for language rights, all these are working to make the study of the nature and possibilities of language policy and planning a field of swift growth. The series will publish empirical studies of general language policy or of language education policy, or monographs dealing with the theory and general nature of the field. We welcome detailed accounts of language policy-making - who is involved, what is done, how it develops, why it is attempted. We will publish research dealing with the development of policy under different conditions and the effect of implementation. We will be interested in accounts of policy development by governments and governmental agencies, by large international companies, foundations, and organizations, as well as the efforts of groups attempting to resist or modify governmental policies. We will also consider empirical studies that are relevant to policy of a general nature, e.g. the local effects of the developing European policy of starting language teaching earlier, the numbers of hours of instruction needed to achieve competence, selection and training of language teachers, the language effects of the Internet. Other possible topics include the legal basis for language policy, the role of social identity in policy development, the influence of political ideology on language policy, the role of economic factors, policy as a reflection of social change. The series is intended for scholars in the field of language policy and others interested in the topic, including sociolinguists, educational and applied linguists, language planners, language educators, sociologists, political scientists, and comparative educationalists.

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Subhan Zein • Maria R. Coady  
Editors

# Early Language Learning Policy in the 21st Century

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# Series Editor Foreword

## Language Policy Book Series: Our Aims and Approach

Recent decades have witnessed a rapid expansion of interest in language policy studies as transcultural connections deepen and expand across the globe. Whether it is to facilitate more democratic forms of participation in civil society, to respond to demands for increased educational opportunities from marginalised communities, or to better understand the technologisation of communication, language policy and planning has come to the fore as a practice and a field of study. In all parts of the world the push for language policy is a reflection of such rapid and deep globalisation, undertaken by governments to facilitate or diversify trade, to design and deliver multilingual public services, to teach less-commonly taught languages and to revitalise endangered languages. There is also interest in forms of language policy to bolster new and more inclusive kinds of language-based and literate citizenship.

Real-world language developments have pushed scholars to generate new theories on language policy and to explore new empirical accounts of language policy processes. At the heart of these endeavours is the search for the resolution of communication problems between ethnic groups, nations, individuals, authorities and citizens, educators and learners. Key research concerns have been the rapid spread of global languages, especially English and, more recently, Chinese, and the economic, social and identity repercussions that follow, linked to concerns about the accelerating threat to the vitality of small languages across the globe. Other topics that have attracted research attention are persistent communication inequalities, the changing language context in different parts of the world, and how language and literacy abilities affect social opportunity, employment and identity.

In the very recent past, language diversity itself has been a popular field of study by which to explore particular ways to classify and understand multilingualism, the fate of particular groups of languages or individual languages, and questions of literacy, script and orthography. In this complex landscape of language change efforts of sub-national and national groups to reverse or slow language shift have dominated concerns of policy makers and scholars. While there is a discernible trend

towards greater openness to multilingualism and increasing concern for language rights, we can also note the continued determination of nation-states to assert a singular identity through language, sometimes through repressive measures.

For all these reasons systematic, careful and critical study of the nature and possibilities of language policy and planning is a topic of growing global significance.

In response to this dynamic environment of change and complexity, this series publishes empirical research on general language policy in diverse domains, such as education, or monographs dealing with the theory and general nature of the field. We welcome detailed accounts of language policy-making that explore the key actors, their modes of conceiving their activity and the perspective of scholars reflecting on the processes and outcomes of policy.

Our series aims to understand how language policy develops, why it is attempted, and how it is critiqued, defended and elaborated or modified. We are interested in publishing research dealing with the development of policy under different conditions and the effect of its implementation. We are interested in accounts of policy undertaken by governments but also by non-governmental bodies, by international corporations, foundations and the like, as well as the efforts of groups attempting to resist or modify governmental policies.

We will also consider empirical studies that are relevant to policy of a general nature, e.g. the local effects of transnational policy influence, such as the United Nations, the European Union or regional bodies in Africa, Asia and the Americas. We encourage proposals dealing with practical questions of when to commence language teaching, the number of hours of instruction needed to achieve set levels of competence, selection and training of language teachers, the language effects of the Internet and issues of program design and innovation.

Other possible topics include non-education domains such as legal and health interpreting, community- and family-based language planning, language policy from bottom-up advocacy, and language change that arises from traditional forms of power alongside influence and modelling of alternatives to established forms of communication.

Contemporary language policy studies can examine the legal basis for language policy, the role of social identity in policy development, the influence of political ideology on language policy formulation, the role of economic factors in the success or failure of language plans, or policy as a reflection of social change.

We do not wish to limit or define the limits of what language policy research can encompass, and our primary interest is to solicit serious book-length examinations, whether the format is for a single-author or multi-author volume or a coherent edited work with multiple contributors.

The series is intended for scholars in the field of language policy and others interested in the topic, including sociolinguists, educational and applied linguists, language planners, language educators, sociologists, political scientists and comparative educationalists. We welcome your submissions or an enquiry from you about ideas for work in our series that opens new directions for the field of language policy.

AM, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Joseph Lo Bianco

Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA

Terrence G. Wiley



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[Language Planning Challenges for the 21st Century], 2006 [reedited in 2011], *Muerte y vitalidad de las lenguas indígenas de México y las presiones sobre sus hablantes* [Death and Vitality of Indigenous Languages in Mexico and the Pressure on Their Speakers], UNAM (2011).

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The original version of this book was revised: The last name of the author in chapter 10 was corrected as García-Landa and the same is followed throughout the book including citations and References. The correction to this chapter is available at [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76251-3\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76251-3_15)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Early Language Learning Policy in the Twenty-First Century



Subhan Zein

**Abstract** This chapter sets the scene for early language learning policy in the twenty-first century. It underscores the ideological contestation underpinning early language learning policy. It shows how early language learning policies are so inherently embedded within educational systems around the world that any theoretical assertions against them will be to no avail. This chapter argues that the field of language policy would be more progressive if it stimulated research into creating conditions that could help teachers and early language learners to succeed, rather than dwelling on academic debates on early second language acquisition. The second section of the chapter shows that all chapters contained in this volume aim to promote conditions that help teachers and early language learners. Further, the section outlines the aims and rationale for the volume while highlighting its significance. Moving on to the third section, the chapter provides an overview of the volume. It summarises all chapters included in the volume, identifying main issues against the backdrop of the linguistic ecology that situates the discussion in each chapter.

**Keywords** Early language learning · Language policy · Language acquisition · Language ideology

### Early Language Learning Policy: Setting the Scene

The perceived value of languages across the rapidly changing political, social and economic landscapes of the twenty-first century has led to the creation of policies on early language learning (ELL). Around the world, language education policies have been developed to build the linguistic resources of young learners. Whether Argentinian children learning English as a foreign language in primary schools,

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Bangladeshi young learners grappling with and fascinated by the complexity and eloquence of Arabic, a group of eight-year-old students in Australia trying to decode Mandarin Chinese characters, or children coming from an English-speaking background family in Britain attempting to pronounce German words properly, an increasing number of young learners around the world are being exposed to a language that is not their mother tongue. These young learners may learn a second, foreign, heritage or additional language in educational contexts such as preschool and primary school (Enever & Lindgren, 2017; Rokita-Jaśkow & Ellis, 2019). The age range for these young learners may vary from one context to another depending on the educational system in each polity, but the inclusion of the learners in early language learning programmes worldwide has made them part of what Johnstone (2009) refers to as “a truly global phenomenon and as possibly the world’s biggest policy development in education” (p. 33).

Indeed, early language learning programmes have become a remarkable phenomenon. Their prevalence on a global scale is apparent. For example, in Europe, the rate of primary school children who did not learn a foreign language fell from 32.5% in 2004/05 to 21.8% in 2009/10 (Eurostat, 2012). In a matter of years, this trend soon translated into a figure reaching nearly 19 million primary school children studying one or more foreign languages in 2013, which is nearly double what it was in 2003 (Eurostat, 2015). Enever (2011, p. 5) reports that almost all European countries now expect children to begin learning a foreign language by the age of nine. A similar trend has also emerged in the 38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries whose membership spans Europe, Asia and the Americas: the teaching of modern foreign languages among children in OECD countries increased from 6% to 14% (OECD, 2016). Meanwhile, nearly all 42 Asian countries have made foreign language instruction to primary school children compulsory, with the majority of them aiming to develop proficiency in English (Baldauf, Kaplan & Kamwangamalu, 2010; Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant, 2011; Spolsky & Moon, 2012). Asian countries such as Bangladesh (Hamid, 2010), China (Qi, 2016), Japan (Ng, 2016), Malaysia (Ali, Hamid & Moni, 2011), South Korea (Kang, 2012), Vietnam (Nguyen, 2011) and Turkey (Kirkgöz, 2007) have all made English compulsory in primary schools, with the possible exception of Indonesia (Zein, 2017a). In the complex linguistic settings of Africa, countries such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya and Ghana have implemented early-exit and late-exit models in primary and secondary education to provide instruction in the mother tongue before proceeding with a second language (van Ginkel, 2017). In the USA, one in five children aged 5–17 has a foreign-born parent, and most of them grow up in a bilingual environment (Shin & Kominski, 2010) – a phenomenon that has led to a growing number of after-school and two-way immersion programmes that deliver instruction in Korean, Mandarin or Spanish (Espinosa, 2013). In Australia, new policy directions to engage with Asia through the white paper *Australia in the Asian Century* means children can learn four priority Asian languages (i.e. Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean) (Midgley, 2017).

This remarkable phenomenon does not stand on its own. Its prevalence has been closely associated with “the younger the better” perspective – a language



acquisition rationale that underpins early language learning policies in many polities (Baldauf et al., 2010, 2011; Butler, 2014; Enever & Moon, 2009; Enever, 2018; Lambelet & Barthele, 2015; Lee & Azman, 2004; Nikolov, 2009a; Ortega, 2009; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017, 2018). The language acquisition rationale goes back to the idea of Canadian brain surgeons Wilder Penfield and Lamar Roberts (1959), who hypothesised that there is a critical age for language learning that ends before puberty. Penfield and Roberts's idea received support from neurolinguist Eric Lenneberg (1967), who proposed a critical period hypothesis (CPH) to explain that biological maturation guides language acquisition. Lenneberg asserted that the human brain reaches its mature state at puberty, making it difficult to acquire a second language (L2) beyond this stage. Lenneberg and later proponents of the CPH (e.g. Abrahamsson & Hylstenstam, 2009; DeKeyser, 2000, 2003; DeKeyser & Larson-Hall, 2005; Long, 2005) argue that due to maturational constraints and loss in brain plasticity, complete mastery of the L2 at native-level proficiency is unattainable if learning does not occur within the critical period. At the societal level, this idea takes shape as a belief in the putative efficacy of early language acquisition. It has grown into a widespread language ideology, in this case, as an infrastructure of beliefs, ideas and perceptions about how language is acquired. When this ideology is articulated at the policy level, early language learning policies are meant to provide children with the opportunity to acquire a language that is not their mother tongue at a time when it is critical for them to do so, an intervention which many believe can benefit them in L2 acquisition. The spread of this ideology is pervasive around the world, reaching countries as diverse as South Korea (Park, 2009), China (Hu, 2007), Indonesia (Zein, 2017a), Poland (Enever, 2007) and Turkey (Kirkgöz, 2007), to name a few.

However, there is little academic justification for early language learning policy as far as language acquisition is concerned. Scholarship has shown that policies on early language learning are flawed on various grounds. The first line of argument relates to the inapplicability of studies set in L2 settings to foreign language (FL) settings. Scholars such as Baldauf, et al. (2010, 2011), Butler (2014) and Scovel (2000) argue that policymakers may not be aware of the fact that findings postulating the validity of the CPH were conducted in L2 natural language environments where exposure to the target language (TL) is abundant. Other scholars (e.g. Kaplan et al., 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2012; Lambelet & Berthele, 2015) claim that stakeholders and policymakers seem to have ignored the fact that children in FL settings, where many early language policies are implemented, do not learn in the L2 natural learning environments. Butler (2014) asserts that “applying the CPH in an FL context is potentially misleading and inappropriate” (p. 5). Second, there is no robust empirical evidence demonstrating that early L2 learners outperform adolescent learners, providing the constancy of the number of instructional hours (García-Mayo & García-Lecumberri, 2003; Muñoz, 2006a; cf. Larson-Hall, 2008). Muñoz (2006b) argues that late starters consistently learn more quickly; in FL settings with minimal input, young children learn languages at a slower rate than adolescent learners. Other studies either show that secondary school beginners could catch up with primary school beginners by the end of the schooling period (e.g. Muñoz, 2008a, 2008b; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017) or older learners could outperform younger

learners (e.g. Lasagabaster & Doiz 2003; Mora, 2006). Overview studies (e.g. Moyer, 2004; Nikolov & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006) also show how adult learners manage to reach high proficiency despite a late start. In her synthesis of 42 empirical studies spanning over 50 years from 1964 to 2014, Huang (2016) concludes that “the current results show no solid linguistic benefits of an early start except for some limited evidence for speech perception, which awaits verification and replication” (p. 269). Furthermore, it has been argued that age is not the sole determining factor for success; and even when it plays a role, its influence is usually moderated. The age factor is a macrovariable that is systematically and inseparably connected with other variables, be they contextual, affective or personal (Moyer, 2014; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011). As Singleton and Pfenninger (2018) argue, “[t]he growing consensus is that the relationship between users of additional languages and the relevant languages cannot relate to maturation alone but must also depend on socio-affective factors” (p. 34).

It is no surprise that a number of leading scholars, including Enever (2007), Baldauf, et al. (2010, 2011), Butler (2014), Kaplan, et al. (2011) and Kirkpatrick (2012), have questioned the notion the earlier the better – the ideology that underpins early language learning policy (see Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Singleton & Pfenninger, 2018, for an overview of the age debate). A few scholars have gone so far as to suggest the postponement of early language learning (e.g. Kaplan et al., 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2010, 2012), seemingly in agreement with Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2001), who state that much of the applied research “points to the advantages of postponing formal teaching in specific contexts” (p. 163). Yasmin (2005, as cited in Hamid & Baldauf, 2008, p. 25), for example, does not specify when early language learning should take place, but she argues that it could appear “a little later in the curriculum but in a more intensified form”.

As appealing as these academic assertions are, they bear little relevance to language policymaking. In the words of Singleton and Pfenninger (2017), “The ‘younger = better’ view is extremely difficult to budge” (p. 220), citing the case of policymakers who are irritated by those pointing out academic facts. Rixon (2013) shows that despite research indicating that successful English language learning is not singularly determined by the age factor, many countries have reduced the age at which English is introduced into the primary, and often the pre-primary, curriculum. Rixon’s findings parallel the data that I compiled from policy documents available in each country’s profile of *UNESCO’s Seventh Edition of World Data on Education 2012* (UNESCO, 2012). I show this in Table 1.1, which lists 84 countries that have made early FL learning compulsory. The 84 countries have lowered the age at which a FL is introduced, from secondary to primary level, which is contrary to assertions made in the academic literature (e.g. Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003; Kaplan et al., 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2010, 2012). It seems that whether they are unaware of research or simply ignore it, policymakers often do things that contradict what scholars suggest. For Mihaljević Djigunović (2014), “the start age has become something of a given because education policymakers decide on the introduction of L2 at a particular age irrespective of what research findings suggest...” (p. 420).

Policymakers also seem to reject the advice to increase instruction time or the actual weekly hours given to early language learning. Increasing instruction time

Table 1.1 Worldwide Instruction Time of Early Foreign Language Learning

Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time
Afghanistan	E	3 × 45'	Germany	E/F	2 × 45'	Poland	E	2 × 45'
Albania	E	2 × 45'	Greece	E	3 × 45'	Qatar	E	6 × 40'
Algeria	F	3 h.	Iraq	E	4 × 40'	Romania	E	2 × 50'
Armenia	R	3 × 45'	Iran	E	2 × 45'	Rwanda	F	5 × 45'
Austria	E/F//Cr	1 × 50'	Israel	E	4 × 45'	Samoa	E	4 × 45'
Azerbaijan	E	4 × 45'	Italy	E	3 × 45'	Saudi Arabia	E	2 × 45'
Bahrain	E	5 × 45'	Japan	E	1 × 45'	Serbia	E/G/F	2 × 45'
Bangladesh	E	3.5 h.	Jordan	E	5 × 45'	Slovakia	E	3 × 45'
Belarus	R	3 × 45'	Kazakhstan	R	2 × 45'	Slovenia	E/R/G	2 × 45'
Belgium	D/E	2 × 50'	Kuwait	E	4 × 45'	South Korea	E	2 × 40'
Bhutan	E	9 × 40'	Kyrgyzstan	R	3 × 45'	Sri Lanka	E	3 h.
Bolivia	E	3 × 40'	Laos	E	2 × 45'	Sudan	E	3 × 40'
Bosnia–Herz.	Cr/E	2 × 45'	Latvia	E/F/G	3 × 40'	Sweden	E	480*
Bulgaria	E/S//G	2 × 45'	Lebanon	F/E	6 × 45'	Syria	E	3 × 45'
Cambodia	E	3 h.	Lithuania	E/F/G	2 × 45'	Taiwan	E	2 × 40'
Chile	E	2 × 45'	Madagascar	E	3 × 45'	Tanzania	E	6 × 40'
China	E	2 × 45'	Malawi	E	8 × 35'	Thailand	E	2 h.
Comoros	A	1 h.	Mexico	E	2 × 45'	Tunisia	E	2 h.
Croatia	E/G//F	3 × 45'	Montenegro	E	2 × 45'	Turkey	E	3 × 40'
Cyprus	E	2 × 40'	Morocco	F	8 h.	Turkmenistan	R	3 × 45'
Czech Rep.	E	3 × 45'	Mozambique	E	3 × 45'	Uganda	E	5 × 30'

(continued)

Table 1.1 (continued)

Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time
Egypt	E	3 × 45'	Myanmar	E	4 × 35'	UAE	E	4 × 45'
Estonia	E/F/G/R	3 × 45'	Nepal	E	5 × 40'	Uruguay	E	4 × 40'
Ethiopia	E	5 × 45'	Niger	E	4 × 45'	Uzbekistan	E	3 × 45'
Finland	E/F/G	2 × 45'	Norway	E	1 h.	Venezuela	E	2 × 45'
France	E/G/F/I	1 × 30'	Oman	E	4 × 40'	Vietnam	E	4 × 45'
Gambia	E	4 × 40'	Palestine	E	5 × 45'	Yemen	E	5 × 45'
Georgia	E	3 × 45'	Panama	E	3 × 40'	Zambia	E	4.5 h.

## Notes

1. *Languages* refers to the compulsory FLs designated for study at the primary level. *E* English, *F* French, *G* German, *S* Spanish, *P* Portuguese, *A* Arabic, *R* Russian, *I* Italian, *Cr* Croatian, *H* Hungarian, *Sv* Slovakian, *Cz* Czech, *D* Dutch. The / mark means *or*, where schools can choose between the designated compulsory languages. For example, in Bosnia–Herzegovina schools can choose either Croatian or English
2. *Instruction time* is the time a public school is expected to deliver instruction to students in foreign languages. The numbers are rounded up 1 point (e.g. 26.7 = 27). Thus, *weekly instruction time* refers to the period or length of instruction that foreign languages are delivered every week. The numbers cited here are based on the policy document for each individual country for a certain year (e.g. the sixth year of primary education)
3. Sweden stipulates compulsory primary FL learning, but it does not specify the weekly instruction time or yearly instruction time. The number cited here refers to the total hours devoted to early FL learning during the 9 years of primary education

has been suggested as instrumental in early language learning (Larson-Hall, 2008; Huang, 2016; Lambelet & Berthele, 2015; Muñoz, 2006b, 2008a). For example, Muñoz (2006b, pp. 32–34) discusses how considerable instruction time is vital for success in early FL learning. She argues that a considerable amount of L2 exposure is a decisive factor for younger starters' success, postulating that they cannot enjoy the benefit of an early start if such a start involves inadequate exposure. Similarly, Lambelet and Berthele argue that

early foreign language education would be more effective if it (substantially) increased the number of contact hours. This would allow younger students to fully profit from their implicit ability to learn language and to learn the foreign language more “naturally” than later learners. (p. 84)

But, again, policymakers develop policies that contradict scholarly evidence, adopting an approach that Johnstone (2018) calls “modest time”. Among the OECD countries, for example, instruction time for early FL learning only constitutes 6% of the total curricula (OECD, 2016). What this means is that of the average 802 hours of instruction per year that OECD countries allocate in the primary curriculum, only approximately 48 hours are dedicated to FL learning. Similarly, the Eurydice Report (2017) explains the situation regarding instruction time for early language learning in countries in the European Union: “... in most countries, the share of instruction time dedicated to foreign languages remains modest in primary curricula. In the majority of countries the proportion ranges between 5 and 10 % of total instruction time” (p. 2). The trend in Europe appears to be in line with the worldwide trend in countries that have made early FL learning compulsory. Using data from UNESCO's *Seventh Edition of World Data on Education 2012* (UNESCO, 2012), I created Table 1.2 to indicate the allocation of instruction time to compulsory early FL learning in comparison with total instruction time for the entire primary curriculum.

Table 1.2 shows that out of 84 countries listed, only Bhutan and Morocco provide more than 5 hours of weekly instruction of early FL learning. The former allots 9 periods of 40-minute instruction to English per week (equivalent to 6 hours), which translates into 20.4% of the total weekly instruction. On the other hand, Morocco dedicates 8 hours of instruction per week to French, or 26.7% of the total weekly instruction. Nineteen countries, including Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Nepal and Yemen, provide between 3 and 5 hours of early FL learning to children. Interestingly, approximately three-fourths of the countries (63) listed in Table 1.2 allocate less than 3 hours to early FL learning. These countries include early learning for languages as varied as German, English and Arabic in the primary curriculum. There are also countries, such as Belgium, China, Estonia, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway, Slovenia, Tunisia and Uzbekistan, that allocate as little as 1 × 30 minutes of instruction per week to as many as 4 × 45 minutes per week. Overall, the 63 countries under this category allocate between 3.5% and 14% of the total weekly instruction.

The allocation of instruction time for early FL learning in the 84 countries included in Table 1.2 is summarised in Chart 1.1. The chart suggests that most countries around the world only offer “modest” instruction time, rather than the

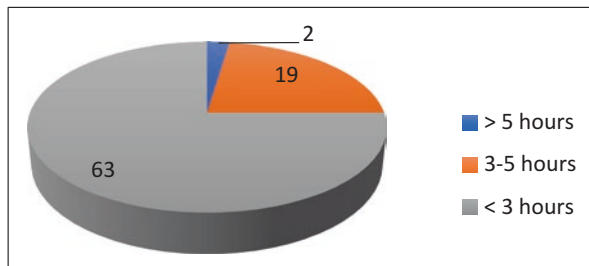
**Table 1.2** Worldwide Percentage of Curricular Time Allocated to Early Foreign Language Learning

Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Total Weekly Instruction	Percentage	Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Total Weekly Instruction	Percentage	Countries	Language(s)	Weekly Instruction Time	Total Weekly Instruction	Percentage
Afghanistan	E	3 × 45'	30 × 45'	10	Germany	E/F	2 × 45'	32 × 45'	6.3	Poland	E	2 × 45'	29 × 45'	6.9
Albania	E	2 × 45'	28 × 45'	7.1	Greece	E	3 × 45'	30 × 45'	10	Qatar	E	6 × 40'	35 × 45'	17.1
Algeria	F	3 h.	30 h.	10	Iraq	E	4 × 40'	34 × 40'	11.7	Romania	E	2 × 50'	24 × 50'	8.3
Armenia	R	3 × 45'	28 × 45'	10.7	Iran	E	2 × 45'	24 × 40'	8.3	Rwanda	F	5 × 45'	31 × 45'	16.1
Austria	E/F/Cr	1 × 50'	28 × 50'	3.5	Israel	E	4 × 45'	30 × 45'	13.3	Samoa	E	4 × 45'	25 × 45'	16
Azerbaijan	E	4 × 45'	29 × 45'	13.7	Italy	E	3 × 45'	30 × 45'	10	Saudi Arabia	E	2 × 45'	32 × 45'	6.3
Bahrain	E	5 × 45'	30 × 45'	16.7	Japan	E	1 × 45'	27 × 45'	3.7	Serbia	E/G/F	2 × 45'	28 × 45'	7.1
Bangladesh	E	3.5 h.	38.25 h.	9.1	Jordan	E	5 × 45'	33 × 45'	15.2	Slovakia	E	3 × 45'	29 × 45'	10.3
Belarus	R	3 × 45'	34 × 45'	8.8	Kazakhstan	R	2 × 45'	27 × 45'	7.4	Slovenia	E/R/G	2 × 45'	31.5 × 45'	6.2
Belgium	D/E	2 × 50'	28 × 50'	7.1	Kuwait	E	4 × 45'	32 × 45'	12.5	South Korea	E	2 × 40'	32 × 40'	6.3
Bhutan	E	9 × 40'	44 × 40'	20.4	Kyrgyzstan	R	3 × 45'	32 × 45'	9.3	Sri Lanka	E	3 h.	29.5 h.	10.1
Bolivia	E	3 × 40'	30 × 40'	10	Laos	E	2 × 45'	29 × 45'	6.9	Sudan	E	3 × 40'	34 × 40'	8.8
Bosnia–Herz.	Cr/E	2 × 45'	26 × 45'	7.7	Latvia	E/F/G	3 × 40'	30 × 40'	10	Sweden	E	480*	6665	7.2
Bulgaria	E/S//G	2 × 45'	30 × 45'	6.7	Lebanon	F/E	6 × 45'	30 × 45'	20	Syria	E	3 × 45'	32 × 45'	9.4
Cambodia	E	3 h.	30 h.	10	Lithuania	E/F/G	2 × 45'	28 × 45'	7.1	Taiwan	E	2 × 40'	32 × 45'	6.3
Chile	E	2 × 45'	30 × 45'	6.7	Madagascar	E	3 × 45'	31 × 45'	9.7	Tanzania	E	6 × 40'	34 × 45'	17.6
China	E	2 × 45'	33 × 45'	6.1	Malawi	E	8 × 35'	51 × 35'	15.7	Thailand	E	2 h.	30 h.	6.7

Comoros	A	1 h.	25 h.	4	Mexico	E	2 × 45'	23 × 45'	8.7	Tunisia	E	2 h.	30.5 h.	6.5
Croatia	E/G//F	3 × 45'	30 × 45'	10	Montenegro	E	2 × 45'	28 × 45'	7.1	Turkey	E	3 × 40'	30 × 40'	10
Cyprus	E	2 × 40'	35 × 40'	5.7	Morocco	F	8 h.	30 h.	26.7	Turkmenistan	R	3 × 45'	37 × 45'	8.1
Czech Rep.	E	3 × 45'	25 × 45'	12	Mozambique	E	3 × 45'	30 × 35'	10	Uganda	E	5 × 30'	40 × 30'	12.5
Egypt	E	3 × 45'	39 × 45'	7.7	Myanmar	E	4 × 35'	40 × 35'	10	UAE	E	4 × 45'	34 × 45'	11.7
Estonia	E/F/G/R	3 × 45'	29 × 45'	10.3	Nepal	E	5 × 40'	39 × 40'	12.8	Uruguay	E	4 × 40'	40 × 40'	10
Ethiopia	E	5 × 45'	35 × 45'	14.3	Niger	E	4 × 45'	32 × 45'	12.5	Uzbekistan	E	3 × 45'	34 × 45'	8.8
Finland	E/F/G	2 × 45'	24 × 45'	8.3	Norway	E	1 h.	20 h.	5	Venezuela	E	2 × 45'	34 × 45'	5.9
France	E/G/F/I	1 × 30'	24 × 30'	4.2	Oman	E	4 × 40'	30 × 40'	13.3	Vietnam	E	4 × 45'	34 × 45'	11.7
Gambia	E	4 × 40'	28 × 40'	14.3	Palestine	E	5 × 45'	33 × 45'	15.2	Yemen	E	5 × 45'	36 × 45'	13.9
Georgia	E	3 × 45'	25 × 45'	12	Panama	E	3 × 40'	36 × 40'	8.3	Zambia	E	4.5 h.	30.5 h.	14.7

**Note:** The early FL curricular percentage for Sweden is calculated by dividing the total hours devoted to early FL learning during the 9 years of primary education by the total hours of instruction allocated in the curriculum for primary education

**Chart 1.1** Number of Countries and Weekly Instruction Time



“considerable” instruction time that scholarship suggests (e.g. Larson-Hall, 2008; Huang, 2016; Lambelet & Berthele, 2015; Muñoz, 2008a). This has occurred for reasons that, for the time being, are unknown to us – a subject for further research.

Thus, while it may be true that a language acquisition rationale plays a role in early language learning policy, it is naïve to argue that academic arguments on the basis of solid language acquisition research could have a significant impact on language policy. As I have argued elsewhere (Zein, 2017b), second language acquisition research may be conducted, but recommendations drawn from it may not offer much potential to inform policymaking or reverse policies already in place. In the words of Janet Enever, who voiced a concern about theoretical arguments against the proliferation of primary English education, “the horse had bolted” (cited in Garton & Copland, 2018a, p. 1), and so any arguments against it “would have no effect on whether English was taught or not”. Indeed, early language learning policies are so inherently embedded within educational systems that any theoretical assertions against them will be to no avail.

This inherent embedment is not solely due to “the earlier the better” ideology, however. Other ideological motivations are also at play. Even in a single polity, various ideological motives may play a role. For example, in the USA, the recently shifting ideology of Spanish having potential as a marketable commodity means an increased interest in the language (Leeman, 2006) and the rise of bilingual education programmes (Cervantes-Soon, 2014). On the other hand, national security was the ideological motivation for the curricular inclusion of French, Spanish and German in the years following the Second World War, and it has become the motivation for the teaching of Arabic, Chinese and Farsi in recent years (Brecht & Rivers, 2012; see Chap. 5, this volume). For children of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Russian backgrounds, heritage maintenance becomes the ideological factor that sustains the teaching of their languages in schools – a movement partly in response to President Barack Obama’s call for linguistically competent and globally competitive American students in the twenty-first century (see Rhodes, 2014; also Chaps. 3, 5 and 9, this volume). From a top-down perspective, early language learning policies may develop as a result of “short-termist politics”, where politicians “strive to confirm their potential for re-election by effecting change over very short time-scales” (Enever, 2018, p. 24). This short-termist politics is reflected in the development of educational policies to upgrade citizens’ second or foreign language skills. In many countries, short-termist politics is shaped into national projects aimed at



enhancing citizens' skills to participate in the global world. Short-termist politics makes a powerful combination when what Brown (1990) calls *parentocracy*, or the influence of parents to affect educational policy, takes shape. In European countries such as Poland (Enever, 2007) as well as Greece, Hungary and Turkey (European Commission, 2005), parents are influential in the political decision to lower the age of instruction for language learning. Parental pressure has also been influential in pushing schools to offer English instruction – an argument made to show that the language would benefit children economically in the long run. In countries such as South Korea (Choi, 2008) and Japan (Butler & Iino, 2005), English has become a high-stakes academic subject. Japanese parents, for example, believe that obtaining high marks in English subjects would bring academic advantages to their children, giving them the edge for employment (Ito & Oshio, 2006, cited in Hashimoto, 2011). In Japan (Butler, 2009a) as in other polities that have made English compulsory in primary schools, such as South Korea (Kang, 2012), Taiwan (Chen & Hsieh, 2011) and China (Butler, 2015a), and even in countries where English is not compulsory, such as Indonesia (Zein, 2017a, 2017c), parents are critical of policies that accentuate discrepancies in access to early English instruction (see Chap. 2, this volume).

Such an ideological contestation occurring at the societal level does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it is embedded in a larger global context (Butler, 2015b; Enever & Moon, 2009). For Hamid (2016), neoliberal ideology, which is linked to globalisation, dictates language policies worldwide. Specifically, Hamid argues that worldwide practices to prepare citizens with language proficiency reflect the prominence of the neoliberal ideology, which “constitutes the main plot of the global political narrative of language” (p. 270). What Hamid argues as taking place on an international scale finds evidence in Enever (2018), whose study of global politics and policies of early English learning points to the idea that English has become a prerequisite for participation in the global economy. Further evidence to support Hamid's contention is found in Asia, where there is a widespread perception that policies that equip citizens with FL competency are crucial for achieving global competitiveness, sustaining economic growth and supporting national development (Hamid & Kirkpatrick, 2016) – an argument that holds true in the case of primary English instruction (Butler, 2015b; Hu & McKay, 2012; Kaplan et al., 2011). Hamid's argument also finds evidence at national levels in countries such as Australia. The release of the white paper *Australia in the Asian Century* endorses the teaching of Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean to Australian primary school children. But the white paper itself, according to Joseph Lo Bianco (2013), is merely a “document of trade, diplomacy and geo-political strategy, recruiting schools and languages to the cause”, when in fact “the cultures and languages of Asian Australian communities were mostly ignored, recruited only when convenient to serve short-term utilitarian interpretations of the national interest” (p. 74).

Thus, instrumentalist and pragmatic views of language (Wee, 2003) that consider language as linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) are at play (see Chaps. 4, 7 and 10, this volume). Seen within this line of reasoning, early language learning policies represent such instrumentalist and pragmatic views of language. Early language

learning policies become part and parcel of the discourse of neoliberalism in globalisation. Governments' abilities to provide early language instruction are equated with equipping children with skills to compete successfully in the global world. Conversely, failure to include early language instruction as part of the education curriculum is seen as jeopardising children's future, compromising their chances to be globally competitive (cf. Enever, 2018).

In a nutshell, early language learning policies have embodied a universal need for more than a national language in people's linguistic repertoire. As people more frequently engage in interactions across borders, the growing need for language proficiency that could prepare future citizens has become more apparent.

## Focus, Rationale and Significance

Early language learning policies have already proliferated, and we should make the best of them. In my earlier work (Zein, 2017b), I showed that early language learning policies may be justified by the potential linguistic and non-linguistic benefits of instruction. Similarly, Huang (2016) sees the justification for early language learning policies in their ability to offer "potential non-linguistic benefits in areas such as cognitive development, academic achievements, and socio-affective benefits" (p. 269). Various studies have indeed demonstrated the positive effects of early language instruction beyond the acquisition of language skills (e.g. Shintani, 2011, 2015) or motivation (e.g. Jin, Ling, Jiang, Yuan, & Xie, 2014), impacting areas such as student performance in academic subjects (e.g. Cooper, Yanosky, & Wisenbaker, 2008) as well as learners' confidence and positive attitudes towards learning (e.g. Cenoz, 2003; Heining-Boynton & Haitema, 2007).

Bearing this in mind, we should move away from what Pfenninger and Singleton (2017) call "a tremendous over reliance on, and blind trust in, the age factor and the amount of time spent learning an FL, at the expense of the conditions of learning" (p. 1). For what proponents of the CPH (e.g. Abrahamsson & Hylténstam, 2009; DeKeyser, 2000, 2003; DeKeyser & Larson-Hall, 2005; Hylténstam & Abrahamsson, 2001, 2003; Long, 2005), its critics (e.g. Bialystok, 2001; Birdsong, 2006; Moyer, 2004), or those who present a balanced view (e.g. Muñoz, 2006b; Scovel, 2000; Singleton & Ryan, 2004) have disputed over the benefit of early language instruction, we deem it a necessary intellectual debate. And when scholars assert that early language learning policies lack theoretical underpinning or academic rationale (e.g. Baldauf et al., 2010, 2011; Enever, 2007; Hu, 2007; Kaplan et al., 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2010, 2012; Lambelet & Berthele, 2015; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017), we should take it as an honest criticism. However, the ship has sailed – early language learning policies continue apace. The time for debating whether early language instruction is beneficial has passed.

The field of language policy would contribute more if it did not focus solely on the age factor in connection with the CPH. Marianne Nikolov (2009a) argues that "the relevance of the critical period hypothesis, widely assumed to underlie the

reasons why ELL is a good idea, is not the most important point of departure for discussions on early start programmes” (p. 26). As such, the focus of language policy should no longer be on starting age alone, which is part of providing access to language learners or what Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2005) call *access policy*. The focus must now rest on how access policy can be pragmatically developed to create conditions for language learning that benefit young learners. As Enever argues (cited in Garton & Copland, 2018a), “we should concentrate instead on investigating the contexts of early language learning with a view to improving approaches so that children and their teachers have good language experiences, inside and outside the classroom” (p. 1). It is now necessary to adopt what I call a pragmatic approach (Zein, 2017b), that is, for early language learning policy to focus on what is practical in order to directly benefit its objects (i.e. young learners), no matter how adverse the conditions are (Kuchah, 2018).

This is not to say that second language acquisition (SLA) theorisation of access policy is not important. What I mean is that theorising access policy would be more beneficial if it were directed to other aspects that are more contextual and practical. For example, studies on access policy have primarily focused on investigating an exact starting age for young learners, that is a universal age to start instruction which can be applicable to all learning contexts. This is underpinned by a one-size-fits-all approach to language policymaking. However, we cannot generalise SLA findings to all contexts given the enormous variations from one learning context to another. In terms of access policy, we need to focus more research on starting age in parallel with other aspects, such as length of instruction, and to frame the discussion within certain contexts, rather than to seek a one-size-fits-all answer that is applicable at a universal scale. What researchers can do is therefore to develop research into starting age and length of instruction in order to obtain findings which fit certain learning contexts, given curricular constraints, sociocultural values and an array of other factors within the linguistic ecology. As Nikolov (2009a) argues, “The age factor needs to be viewed in its context; all conditions have to be taken into consideration, as so many other factors contribute to the implementation of ELL programmes that they vary to a large extent” (p. 26). By doing so, researchers in the field of language policy can stimulate research into creating conditions that could help teachers and early language learners to succeed. This is how the field of language policy could be more progressive.

Shifting the focus on creating learning and teaching conditions through policy interventions is the spirit that unites the chapters in this edited volume. The volume advances Bernard Spolsky’s (1989, 2014) thesis for the creation of conditions for successful early language learning and teaching through policy interventions (cf. Johnstone, 2009, 2018; see also Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2014, pp. 756–758; Enever, 2018, pp. 165–171). Following Spolsky’s (2014) approach to language teaching and learning, all the chapters in this volume take linguistic profiling as a starting point, hence identifying “the general ecology of language - what languages are used by government, in business, in education, and by what section of the community” (p. xv) in the examination of early language learning policies. Such an approach allows the chapters to capture the complexity of early language learning

policy contexts around the world by analysing policymaking as well as various concerns, expectations, implementation, progress and outcomes.

For example, access policy is a highly complex issue (Baldauf et al., 2010, 2011; Kaplan et al., 2011) (see Chap. 2, this volume). In addition to starting age, which was discussed earlier, concerns such as equality and inclusiveness have dominated the discourse of access policy for early language learning in Europe (Enever, 2011) as well as primary English education in East Asia (Butler, 2009a) and South-East Asian countries such as Malaysia (Ali, et al., 2011) and Indonesia (Zein, 2017a, 2017c). In Australia, one issue of access policy relates to the limited set of languages that children could choose to learn (i.e. Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Mandarin). This is a decision which, in the words of Hamid and Kirkpatrick (2016), has “restricted people’s choices. The selection of languages has been guided by the narrower focus of the value of languages – for economic and political imperative...” (p. 39), rather than cultural, intellectual and humanistic rationales (Lo Bianco & Aliani, 2013).

Another challenge faced by polities introducing early language learning policies is *personnel policy*, which concerns the professional development of teachers, their recruitment and retention (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, 2005). The complexity of tackling personnel policy has been highlighted ever since “the third wave” (Johnstone, 2009) of early language learning entered its first decade in the 2000s (e.g. Baldauf et al., 2010; Emery, 2012; Kaplan et al., 2011) and recent book-length publications on early language learning and teacher education demonstrate how this issue arose in the second decade (e.g. Wilden & Porsch, 2017; Zein & Garton, 2019). In the seven European countries (Croatia, England, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden) joining the Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE) Project (see Enever, 2011), issues concerning personnel policy are ongoing (Enever, 2012; see also Enever, 2014). Further, improving the professionalism of English teachers in Japan (Carreira & Shigyo, 2019) and Vietnam (Canh, 2019) is as complex as developing teacher education programmes for teachers of modern languages (e.g. French, German) in Great Britain (Macrory, 2019), for teachers of Italian in Turkey (Carbonara, 2019), or for dual language immersion teachers who teach Spanish and English in the US (Griffin et al., 2019).

However, scholarship has also identified problems other than access and personnel policies. Educational practitioners, researchers and policymakers alike are confronted by various issues that undermine the implementation of early language learning policies. These include issues concerning the provision of an appropriate curriculum for young learners, or *curriculum policy* (e.g. Garton, 2014; Rixon, 2013), the creation of age-appropriate and culturally relevant teaching materials, or *materials policy* (e.g. Copland et al., 2014; Nguyen, 2011), the development of pedagogical approaches to teaching young learners, or *methodology policy* (e.g. Enever, 2011; Hamid & Honan, 2012), socio-economic factors affecting and affected by the provision of early language learning, or *resource policy* (e.g. Butler & Le, 2018), societal pressure and parental demand intervening and affecting policy directions, or *community policy* (e.g. Butler, 2015a; Zein, 2017c), and management

of assessment practices, or *evaluation policy* (e.g. Butler, 2009b; Sayer, Ban, & López de Anda, 2017).

The chapters included in this volume will show parallels in the identification of the aforementioned problems. However, all the chapters will also illustrate the various successes and failures of policy enactment. Thus, in attempting to accomplish its goal to advance scholarship and inform policymaking, this volume offers insights into policy interventions to create conditions for successful learning and teaching. It is hoped that this will help researchers, teachers and policymakers around the world to develop effective conditions for early language learning instruction to young learners. The volume also highlights the unique linguistic ecologies and socio-historical contexts of the polities investigated. This highlights our commitment in this volume to offer content that is diverse while contextually illuminating the nature of early language learning policies in specific polities.

This undertaking is crucial for a field that was once considered to be too practical and of little academic value – the neglected child of applied linguistics (cf. Garton & Copland, 2018b; Nikolov & Curtain, 2000). Nowadays, early language learning has acquired significant importance. Following the International Association of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) debate on English for Young Learners (EYL) in 2014 and the publication of the first *ELT Journal* special issue on the topic (Copland & Garton, 2014), the Early Language Learning Research Network emerged and became part of the *Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée* (AILA). Meanwhile, a new journal published by John Benjamins, *Language Teaching for Young Learners* (edited by Dingfang Shu and Rod Ellis), has recently been released, dedicated “to the teaching and learning of foreign/second languages for young learners”. Furthermore, Multilingual Matters’s *Early Language Learning in School Contexts* (edited by Janet Enever) is now a popular book series with the publication of four volumes within 2 years of its inception.

Despite these advancements, policy is a topic underexplored within the field of early language learning. Most publications covering early language learning policy are limited to academic articles or book chapters, covering mainly English in various polities such as Bangladesh (e.g. Hamid, 2010; Hamid & Honan, 2012), China (e.g. Hu, 2007; Qi, 2016), Japan (e.g. Butler, 2007; Hashimoto, 2011; Ng, 2016), Indonesia (e.g. Hawanti, 2014; Zein, 2017a, 2017c), Malaysia (e.g. Ali et al., 2011), South Korea (e.g. Garton, 2014; Kang, 2012) and Vietnam (e.g. Canh & Do, 2012; Nguyen, 2011). Longer publications, such as reports of commissioned research projects, cover the policy and practice of primary English at a global level; an example is Rixon (2013). Other research reports cover topics such as global pedagogical practices with respect to EYL (Garton, Copland & Burns, 2011) and teacher qualifications and development (Emery, 2012).

With the proliferation of EYL at the global level, book-length publications on the topic dominate the market (i.e. Bland, 2015; Copland & Garton, 2018; Enever, 2018; Enever et al., 2009; García Mayo & García Lecumberri, 2003; Lee & Azman, 2004; López-Gopar, 2016; Mihaljević Djigunović & Medved Krajnović, 2015; Rich, 2014; Shin & Crandall, 2014; Spolsky & Moon, 2012; Nikolov, 2017; Wilden & Porsch, 2017). However, this dominance has appeared with relatively little

emphasis on policy. Ever since Lee and Azman (2004) explored the proliferation of primary schools offering English instruction as a global phenomenon of the new millennium, there have only been three book-length publications that touch upon policy issues (i.e. Enever et al., 2009; Enever, 2018; Spolsky & Moon, 2012). Both Enever et al. (2009) and Enever (2018) take a global perspective to examine the complexities of policy and politics of primary English education, whereas Spolsky and Moon (2012) specifically focus on the policy and practice of primary English education in Asia. Most book-length publications on EYL examine issues such as the age factor, pedagogy, assessment and teacher education. The age factor is the focus of García Mayo & García Lecumberri (2003), whereas pedagogy is at the core of works by Shin and Crandall (2014) and Bland (2015), both of which offer practical insights into the teaching of EYL with relevant theoretical underpinnings. Pedagogy is also at the heart of Rich (2014) and Copland and Garton (2018), except that both of these volumes discuss practical issues of EYL teaching with perspectives from a range of diverse settings worldwide. An innovative approach to EYL pedagogy is taken by authors in Mihaljević Djigunović and Medved Krajnović (2015), who employ dynamic systems theory to examine the complexities of the EYL classroom. Other book-length publications are not related to policy either but rather tackle assessment from global and local perspectives (Nikolov, 2017), the professional development of primary EFL teachers (Wilden & Porsch, 2017) and the impact of primary English teaching on linguistic diversity and language rights (López-Gopar, 2016).

While there is relatively limited coverage of policy on EYL, none of the twelve book-length publications on the broader field of early language learning specifically cover policy issues (i.e. Berthele & Lambelet, 2017; García Mayo, 2017; Lambelet & Berthele, 2015; Muñoz, 2006a; Murphy, 2014; Nikolov, 2009a, 2009b; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017; Pinter, 2011; Prošić-Santovac, & Rixon, 2019; Rokita-Jaskow & Ellis, 2019; Zein & Garton, 2019). Publications such as those by Lambelet and Berthele (2015), Muñoz (2006a) and Pfenninger and Singleton (2017) explore the age factor in instructional second language learning, whereas Pinter (2011) and Murphy (2014) both offer extensive overviews of studies relevant to child language acquisition. Edited volumes, such as those by Nikolov (2009b, 2009c), Rokita-Jaškow and Ellis (2019) and García Mayo (2017), offer interesting research insights into the early language classroom. Three other edited volumes tackle issues as diverse as assessment (Prošić-Santovac & Rixon, 2019), heritage and school language literacy development (Berthele & Lambelet, 2017) and teacher education (Zein & Garton, 2019).

It is apparent that scholarship has devoted little coverage to policy on early language learning, and when it does, the focus is solely on English. Thus, we do not know much about the practices and outcomes of early language learning policies of other globally important languages, or world languages (e.g. Arabic, German, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish), in many parts of the world. This is despite the emergence of Chinese in astonishingly diverse contexts (Lo Bianco, 2007), which has resulted in the demand for Chinese instruction in countries such as Australia (Midgley, 2017) and regions such as Latin America (Gao, 2017); the significant



growth of multilingual learners aiming to learn Spanish, Korean and Chinese in the USA (Bailey & Osipova, 2016; Rhodes, 2014); the continuous privilege of Arabic in the primary curriculum in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the increasing number of primary schools offering Arabic instruction in the USA (Sehlaoui, 2008); the surge of interest in learning Spanish among children in European countries (JCQ, 2017); and the heavy promotion from the French government through Franco-German cultural cooperation to support early German language learning (Costa & Lambert, 2009).

To date, no book-length publication has compiled research on early language learning policies on world languages such as Arabic, English, German, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish and how those policies are implemented around the world. Addressing this issue is of paramount importance to unravel how countries develop policies on world languages, especially in consideration of the demand for world languages in global communication on the one hand (Ammon, 2010), and the pressing need to maintain language diversity and national identity on the other (Lo Bianco, 2008, 2014). By the same token, noting the fact that it has been two decades since the so-called the third wave of early language learning policies (Johnstone, 2009), it is also important to analyse the progress and outcomes in polities whose policies have been engaged in this work for a period of time. Clearly there is a need for a volume that covers policies on early learning of English and other world languages. This rationale gives the impetus to the present volume.

Furthering the debates on early language learning policies worldwide is not only timely but also significant for acquiring an understanding of policymaking and expectations in various countries or regions around the world, including the regions of Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa and Oceania. The global and diverse policy contexts united in this volume is what gives it its international flavour. The diverse contexts demonstrate not only the global coverage of early language learning policies but also their significance in the worldwide scope of early language learning. The world languages covered in the book include Arabic, English, German, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish. This will provide academics working in language education and or on language policy issues with an understanding of recent debates and key trends in the making, implementation, progress and outcomes of early language policies on those languages on a global scale. In discussing the implementation of early language learning policies in various contexts worldwide, all the contributors in this volume will provide coverage of aspects of the language-in-education policy goals framework by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2005). These include discussions on (1) access policy, (2) community policy, (3) resources policy, (4) materials and methods policy, (5) personnel policy, (6) curriculum policy and (7) evaluation policy. This is meant to ensure comprehensive coverage of the various aspects of policy on early language learning.

## Book Overview

In addition to this introductory chapter, this volume contains 12 main chapters and a concluding chapter. The main chapters are divided into four parts: (1) providing access and strengthening community, (2) redesigning curriculum and enhancing instruction, (3) preparing high-quality teachers and (4) connecting domains across language policies.

In Part I, three Chaps. (2, 3, and 4) focus on access and community policies. Contributors to these chapters highlight the importance of providing equal access to early language learning, enabling training through communities of practice and developing intercultural understanding at community level. They do so while elaborating on the rich contexts encompassed in this part: Japan, Serbia and Oceania.

The first part starts with Chap. 2, written by Yuko Goto Butler. Though Japanese monolingualism prevails, Japan is by no means linguistically homogenous, with minority languages such as Ainu, Kikai and Yaeyama as well as languages of migrants and foreign residents spoken in the country (e.g. Chinese, English, Spanish) (Ethnologue, 2019b). As such, Japanese language policy has focused on the development of a nationalistic adherence to Japanese identity (Liddicoat, 2007), and at the turn of the twenty-first century there was heated debate on whether English should be designated an official language (Butler, 2015b, p. 305). However, the Japanese central government was indecisive about whether to make English a compulsory academic subject in primary schools while facing “growing diversification” due to varied micro-level policies where some schools introduce Japanese-English immersion programmes but others do not (Butler, 2007). This situation held until the government finally included English as part of “foreign language activities” in the 2011 curriculum (Hashimoto, 2011). Implementation has been poor in terms of curriculum policy, personnel policy and materials policy (Ng, 2016) – an observation evident in the various issues exacerbating EYL pedagogy in the Japanese classroom (e.g. Carreira, 2012; Fennelly & Luxton, 2011; Machida & Walsh, 2015). And yet, as Butler shows, recent developments point to a plan to make English a compulsory academic subject for fifth and sixth grades in 2020. While what is called “English fever” in Japan may not be as intense as in its South Korean neighbour (Park, 2009), obsession with English is apparent. Evidence for it comes from the complex sociocultural and ideological factors that motivate Japanese learners of English to cross West and South-East Asia (Kobayashi, 2018) and the fact that Japanese parents are anxious to see policies that could give their children an edge in terms of early English acquisition (Butler, 2015b). Thus, the policy for making English compulsory in primary schools is welcomed. However, Butler argues that there is a serious “mismatch between the policy assumption that English proficiency is a global competency and the realities of day-to-day life in much of Japan”. There are already emerging localised practices of primary English education, and thus centralising instruction in primary schools requires the language to be part of the national exam-based education system. For this reason, Butler argues that centralising the policy might just promote inequality in the face of the



social-economic disparities currently increasing within Japanese society. On the other hand, as Butler argues, removing English from the national exam would provide opportunities for creative and distinctive local practices to flourish. Butler asserts that schools need to adopt additive bilingualism, making use of diverse languages and cultures rather than solely concentrating on English.

In Chap. 3, Jelena Filipović and Ljiljana Djurić discuss policy on the learning of FLs among young learners in Serbia. Located at the crossroads of Central and South-East Europe, Serbia has about 8.7 million people (Worldometers 2019c) and a total of 17 living languages within its linguistic ecology (Ethnologue, 2019f). Within the education system, these languages are categorised into four types: (1) Serbian as L1, (2) Serbian as L2 (for ethnic minorities), (3) minority languages and (4) traditionally designated FLs (i.e. English, French, German and Russian) (Filipović, Vučo, & Djurić, 2007). Embracing a socialist perspective that favours equal linguistic opportunity for all ethnicities, Serbian language education policy documents declaratively promote linguistic rights for all nations and nationalities. But in terms of policy implementation, Serbia's seemingly fair socio-political framework of language education policy only leads to either subtractive bilingualism resulting in minority groups being denied access to higher education or a growing language shift to Serbian (Filipović et al., 2007). As a result, the issue of developing plurilingual competence among Serbian learners has been ongoing (Filipović et al., 2007), and this is further examined by Filipović and Djurić in the face of the proliferation of early FL learning programmes (particularly English). Filipović and Djurić note that the increasing significance of English as the global lingua franca has given the language an increased prominence within the education system in the country. Against this backdrop, the authors offer their critique. First, while English has been prevalent, the pervasive traditional teaching methods limit the application of additive plurilingualism that allows for the use of diverse languages at different levels of communicative competence in one's linguistic repertoire. Second, there is what Djurić (2016, p. 491) calls the "black box of the state", that is, when politically driven decisions often contradict overt language policies. This has resulted in language hierarchy within the education system, whereby English is put above other FLs (i.e. French, German, Russian), eventually leading to their marginalisation in the Serbian classroom. Implying the importance of community-based policy, the authors argue for bottom-up approaches to policymaking which enable quality pre-service and in-service teacher training and ongoing leadership activity of communities of practice.

In Chap. 4, Grace Yue Qi examines early Mandarin learning in two countries in Oceania: Australia and New Zealand. In contemporary Australia and New Zealand, the teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese have been foregrounded by the large number of migrants from the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Australia is the "new gold mountain", a preferred destination for new Chinese immigrants (Gao, 2017), as evidenced by the 2016 census showing the presence of 1.2 million Australian residents of Chinese origin (ABS, 2020). In New Zealand, Chinese migrants "contribute greatly to the global Chinese diaspora population" (Liu, 2017, p. 234), with statistics showing that migration from the People's

Republic of China has remained the second largest (94,859) after Great Britain (149,969). This sets the background for Qi's discussion of early Mandarin learning in this chapter. According to Qi, the introduction of Mandarin Chinese in mainstream and complementary education in Australia and New Zealand has been propelled by the relatively strong meso-level advocacy involving various Chinese communities. Qi shows how mainstream education in the two countries is facing serious issues concerning curriculum policy. In Australia, this relates to the implementation of policies on early Mandarin learning as stipulated in the Australian Curriculum for Languages and the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) programme, whereas in New Zealand this concerns the policies set out in *Learning Languages* and *Early Learning Curriculum*. Although both countries face difficulties in terms of the availability of qualified and proficient teachers whose teaching methods can promote learning and sustain interest, early Mandarin learning built by communities has remained steady to complement mainstream education. For both mainstream and complementary forms of education dealing with the teaching of Mandarin Chinese, Qi argues that "early language learning should foster intercultural understanding and awareness in order to maintain a long-term interest of learning and develop multilingual repertoires". This assertion fits the multilingual contexts in both countries. Even though both countries are multilingual, with Australia having over 300 languages (ABS, 2016) and New Zealand 64 immigrant languages (Ethnologue, 2019h), they still develop a monolingual mindset in English in terms of policies concerning immigrant and indigenous languages (Liddicoat, 2017; Starks, Harlow, & Bell, 2005; see also Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017).

The volume then continues with Part II. In this part, the focus is on curriculum policy and improving educational instruction for FL teaching and learning. All chapters included in this part (5, 6, and 7) highlight the intricate issues surrounding provisioning curriculum to early learners of Spanish, Arabic and English. The contributors to this part focus on revamping curriculum as well as accounting for other aspects of pedagogy in order to enhance instruction.

In Chap. 5, Adriana Raquel Díaz uses the state of Queensland as a case study to examine early language education policy on Spanish, the ninth largest community language in contemporary Australia with 140,813 speakers (ABS, 2016). Situated within Australia's highly diverse sociolinguistic landscape where over 300 separately identified languages are spoken in the home (ABS, 2016), Spanish is taught at the primary level in 111 schools across the country and in 18 schools in Queensland (Australian Schools Snapshot, 2015). Díaz examines the recently developed *Australian Curriculum* (AC) and the *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) and their focus on "intercultural understanding" (IU) with a particular focus on the Queensland government's Curriculum to Classroom (C2C) programme. This state-based policy is significant in the absence of "a coherent policy for languages in general and for languages in education specifically" (Scarino, 2014, p. 292). It offers hope in the effort to tackle what Michael Clyne (2005) calls a pervasive "monolingual mindset" that dictates sole literacy in English in a multicultural Australia. And yet, Díaz notes that Spanish language programmes in Queensland under the C2C, as elsewhere in Australia, remain fragile and disjointed (see also Lo

Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). At a time when language education policy in Australia is experiencing apparent difficulties in the continuation of language education across schooling levels and sectors in terms of syllabus design, evaluation, and assessment (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017), Diaz rightly calls for more research into the curriculum area. As such, curriculum research may work within the framing of Spanish not just as a heritage/community language but also as a tool for creating generative dialogue concerning diversity and integration, as well as promoting engagement with First Nations peoples, histories and cultures. Diaz further argues that there is an urgent need to prepare teachers as vital agents of educational change in order to implement curricular innovations that suit their localised needs for developing intercultural understanding from an early age.

Chapter 6 was written by Obaidul Hamid and Maksud Ali. The writers focus on early Arabic learning policy in Bangladesh, a country with 163.5 million people (Worldometers, 2019b) and 41 living languages, including its national language, Bangla (Ethnologue, 2019a). Reflecting the global trend in which preparation to gain proficiency in languages of global importance can be seen through the lens of neoliberal ideology (Hamid, 2016), Bangladesh is currently experiencing “a neoliberal turn” in that its language education policy is dictated by global economic imperatives (Hamid & Rahman, 2019). While this has been most evident in the teaching of English, which has gained great prominence in recent years (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hamid & Rahman, 2019), in this chapter Hamid and Ali show that the trend towards learning Arabic on economic grounds has also gained traction. However, for approximately 90% of the Bangladeshi population who are Muslims, the recent call for secularisation of Bangladeshi society as well as the socio-political and linguistic ideologies associated with Bangla-centric nationalism can only mean the positioning of Arabic at the bottom of the Bangladeshi linguistic hierarchy. Hamid and Ali show that in the Bangladeshi sociolinguistic landscape where Arabic is subjected to hostile social reception and the teaching of Arabic is confined to the religious stream of education called *madrassa*, curriculum policy remains a major issue. In the crowded primary level *madrassa* curriculum where coverage of religious and secular subjects as well as languages (e.g. Bangla, English and Arabic) must be accommodated, delivery of Arabic (in terms of teaching hours) is inadequate. Hamid and Ali predict it is unlikely that there will be policies leading to educational changes in the teaching of Arabic. The authors call for further research on the pedagogical issues surrounding Arabic language teaching and learning – an argument pertinent to the development of a Bangladeshi language policy that supports “an education system that can bring about a healthy juxtaposition between heritage and modernity” (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014, p. 1).

The last chapter in this part, Chap. 7, written by Eustard R. Tibategeza and Theodorus du Plessis, discusses early English learning in Tanzania, home to 150 individual living languages. Like other formerly colonised African countries, Tanzania had to choose between an endoglossic and an exoglossic language policy: the former promoting an indigenous or several indigenous languages as official or national languages, the latter adopting the language of the former colonials. This led Tanzania to choose Kiswahili, spoken by approximately 90% of the population, as

a national language, in order to promote nationalistic sentiments (Batibo, 1998). However, English has also become increasingly important for the 58.4 million people of Tanzania (Worldometers, 2019d). While initial language policy points to the ideal of bilingual education that requires a system of additive bilingualism where both Kiswahili and English would be languages of education, recent policy that favours subtractive bilingualism has prevailed (Tibategeza & du Plessis, 2012). For Tibategeza and du Plessis (2012), the policy on making Kiswahili the only medium of instruction at the primary level and English as the only medium of instruction at the secondary level and beyond reveals “a limited understanding of what a system for promoting bilingualism and biliteracy in education should involve” (p. 184). In their chapter, Tibategeza and du Plessis extend the debate on the issue, focusing on the challenges surrounding the curricular plans to make English a medium of instruction in primary education in Tanzania. The authors argue that the aspiration for bilingual Tanzanian citizens might be unattainable if only Kiswahili or English is made the sole medium of instruction in both primary and secondary education. They note that the curriculum policy itself faces difficulties, showing how it reflects unrealistic expectations in a setting where the learning environment is uncondusive given high student/teacher ratio and limited interaction in the target language. Meanwhile, the implementation of early English learning is exacerbated by an overwhelming majority of the teachers who have limited proficiency in English and could barely deliver instruction in the language. Further, the authors discuss micro-level policies that are developed at the school level to tackle the issue of limited exposure to English while arguing for improved learning conditions through the employment of competent teachers, decreased student/teacher ratio, well-written teaching materials, and the implementation of competence-based curriculum.

The end of Chap. 7 leads us to Part Three. In Part Three, we focus on personnel policy, which mainly deals with the preparation of quality teachers. The three chapters in this part cover early language learning contexts such as Argentina, Israel and Mexico. While highlighting factors that enmesh policy implementation, the work from these contributors demonstrates how an integrated personnel policy aimed at upgrading teacher professionalism is key to improving quality.

Chapter 8 focuses on early English learning policy in Argentina, the second largest Spanish-speaking country in the world with a population of nearly 45 million (Worldometers, 2019a). The chapter’s authors, Cristina Banfi and Raymond Day, present a historical overview of early FL learning in the country, which can be traced back to 1904 when English and French were taught to first graders. This educational policy received additional support in 2006 when policies such as the National Education Law, the Core Learning Priorities and the Reference Framework for Languages were enacted to make learning a second language mandatory in both primary and secondary schools (British Council, 2015; Porto, 2016). Banfi and Day focus on the teaching of English to early learners, reflecting a nationwide trend where most provinces within the federally governed Argentina promote the learning of English over other languages such as French, Italian and Portuguese. Banfi and Day note that English is situated within a linguistic ecology with growing complexity. While noting issues concerning access policy and curriculum policy, the authors

show that what makes early English language learning complicated is personnel policy. Banfi and Day describe a tendency towards ad hoc curricular reforms of teacher education where areas of perceived needs, such as new pedagogical approaches and the incorporation of technologies, have been developed. While this is promising, talented, aspiring teachers or those currently employed are confronted by the harsh reality of their profession being characterised by low social status, limited wages and adverse work conditions. As a result, teachers are often multi-institutionally employed, being some kind of a pollinator who may bring fresh ideas to revitalise a teaching climate but may have fragmented ties with colleagues and institutions and experience reduced teaching hours. Banfi and Day offer personnel policy strategies, such as job placement measures and provision of incentives, that would promote teacher retention. They also highlight the importance of an overhaul in preservice education to cater for the needs of young learners by focusing less on the target language in second language contexts or privileged teaching environments and more on different situational and educational contexts. These are welcome initiatives in light of the difficulties teachers are facing in the implementation of recent language reforms in Argentina that stipulate an “intercultural and plurilingual approach in the teaching of foreign languages, including English, at all levels of education and embrace a social justice conceptualisation of education in all cases” (Porto, 2016, p. 21).

In Chap. 9, Ruwaida Abu Rass examines the teaching of Arabic to early learners in Israel. Arabic is an official language of Israel (alongside Hebrew) and the language of approximately 20% of the population. The policy to teach Arabic in Israeli Jewish schools was rationalised at one time, and hindered at other times, by the Zionist project of Jewish sectarianism (Uhlmann, 2011). The policy has been implemented amidst the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict characterised by the diplomatic stalemate resulting from Israel’s occupation of the West Bank (Rubin, 2017). Though the general portrait of Arabic instruction in Israel is “unsatisfactory by both objective and subjective measures” (Uhlmann, 2011, p. 97), scholarship shows that teaching Arabic to Israeli pupils could have a positive impact on their attitudes towards the target language, culture and out-group members as well as their motivation to learn it (e.g. Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar & Shohamy, 2004; Dubiner, 2010). In Chap. 9, Abu Rass examines challenges to the policy on teaching Arabic to early learners in Israel. Abu Rass argues that the main issue faced by early Arabic learning in Israel is status planning. The low status of the language means that there are widespread negative attitudes towards the language and its speakers and a prevalent belief in its low value as linguistic capital. Set in a context where the Israeli government has deliberately prepared a curriculum which aims to ensure that Arabs are loyal to the young state and disconnected from Arab nationalism, the author argues that there is a need for a new language policy that could increase the status of Arabic as both linguistic and cultural capital. Abu Rass proposes some policy changes in terms of materials and methodology, resources, curriculum and evaluation policies while highlighting a major issue in terms of personnel policy. The author notes the difficulty of recruiting proficient and qualified teachers of Arabic. She explains that the policy to recruit female Muslim teachers to teach in Jewish schools is a difficult

task, especially during periods of tension. Further, Abu Rass's argument on a renewed personnel policy is important particularly in light of Dubiner's (2010) research that shows how intervention by language educators is useful in bringing "better intergroup understanding in areas of conflict" and "may assist in social change in a complex world" (p. 11).

Moving to the final chapter of this part, Chap. 10, Laura García-Landa writes about early English learning policy in Mexico. Situated in Central America, Mexico has a highly diverse linguistic ecology, with Ethnologue (2019g) reporting the presence of 287 living languages, a great majority of which (282) are indigenous. A dynamic and complex linguistic ecology, Mexico has become a site of linguistic contestation where Spanish plays a hegemonic role while smaller, locally used indigenous languages are reported to be experiencing language shift and endangerment (Terborg, García-Landa, & Moore, 2007). Within such a linguistic ecology, English has become increasingly important (Terborg et al., 2007), emerging in a manner that reflects and reproduces "neo-liberal ideologies" (Perales Escudero, Reyes Cruz & Murrieta Loyo, 2012). This is evidenced by the introduction of the *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica* (PNIEB), which introduced English to primary school children in 2009, at a time when the country was undergoing basic education reform and the extension of compulsory education from 9 to 13 years (Perales Escudero et al., 2012; Sayer, 2015). In this chapter, García-Landa examines another rationale of the PNIEB policy, demonstrating how it is underpinned by the idea to create plurilingual Mexican citizens: those who speak the mother tongue, English, and a third language, enabling intercultural dialogue in the process. The author then focuses on the impact of the PNIEB on personnel policy. She shows that the PNIEB lacks integration in terms of teaching platform and communication between policy stakeholders. She additionally shows that the issue of personnel policy has been so convoluted that ongoing problems related to the source of teachers and their training, coupled with a lack of communication, poor administration and limited remuneration and resource planning, have challenged the implementation of the PNIEB. While English has been rhetorically argued as being beneficial for social mobility and economic competitiveness, García-Landa argues that conditions of teaching English are lamentable in that teachers' agentive role has been restricted to the extent that they "are voided of their power to be treated as part of community of practice". Parallel to the argument made in Perales Escudero et al. (2012), García-Landa calls for greater empowerment for teachers to sustain their agentive role, specifically by actively participating in the creation of micro-language policies at the local level.

Finally, we reach the concluding part of the book, Part IV, which covers several domains within Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework, including materials, resource, evaluation, methodology and personnel policies. Examining early language learning policies on Spanish, Mandarin and German, chapters included in this part (11, 12, and 13) cover various domains of the policy framework pertinent to their contexts. Importantly, these chapters demonstrate how the various dimensions of Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework overlap and intersect. The



contributors to these chapters highlight the importance of connecting various policy domains leading to an integrated, sustainable policy enactment.

In Chap. 11, Maria R. Coady, Hyunjin Jinna Kim, and Nidza Marichal examine early Spanish learning policy in the United States (US). Ethnologue (2019e) lists 219 living languages spoken in the US, with 194 languages being categorised as indigenous (e.g. Apache Lipan, Cherokee, Hawai'i pidgin) and 25 as non-indigenous (e.g. Basque, Hindi, Thai). Despite the apparently multilingual environment, the US has no official language policy (Lo Bianco, 2001; Spolsky, 2011), and federal policy aimed at promoting “multilingualism in the US continues to be weak” (Wiley & García, 2016, p. 60). Only two states (Alaska and Hawai'i) have declared languages other than English as official, while 32 states stipulate a sole official status for English – West Virginia being the latest (US English, 2016). Within this sociolinguistic landscape, Spanish, the language spoken in the home by more than 41 million people aged 5 years or older (US Census, 2017), is not an official language in any of the 50 states or 14 territories of the US. In this chapter, Coady, Kim, and Marichal focus on the state of Florida, where 21% of the 21 million who live there speak Spanish in the home. The authors examine how school programmes have been developed to cater for the needs of pre-primary through grade 2 primary school learners of Spanish. The authors show the continuing tensions arising between resource policies on the one hand and personnel, methodology and curriculum policies on the other. They argue that the limited funding and resources allocated to Spanish teaching for young learners reflect the monolingual orientation of US language policy, which, coupled with ongoing political pressures, have debilitated the rich linguistic resources of Spanish. The authors note that in terms of curriculum policy, schools can implement either additive or subtractive views of bilingualism, depending on whether support is given to Spanish speaking children who attend Head Start bilingual education programmes. What the authors find as a major challenge is personnel policy, as the number of qualified teachers who can provide academic instruction through Spanish continuous to be limited. While calling for this issue to be resolved, the authors also highlight the importance of systematic datasets of children's home languages and bilingual programmes which can be cross-referenced with methodology, personnel and curriculum policies. What the authors point out in their chapter is important in light of the broader context of US language education policy. As Wiley and García (2016) assert:

A strong language education policy in the United States that would support bilingualism as a resource must start by acknowledging the language practices of U.S. bilingual communities, and not simply rely on the constructed understandings of national languages that have informed much language education policy in the past. (p. 60)

In Chap. 12, our focus is on early learning of Mandarin Chinese in South America, particularly Argentina, Chile and Paraguay. Outside of South-East Asia, South America as a whole has been a major destination for Chinese migrants: first when a wave of migration prompted by wars and political turmoil occurred between 1949 and 1979, and then when the global migration of Chinese – a phenomenon known as *xin yimin* – started from the 1980s (Gao, 2017). This wave of migration

led to the retention of Mandarin as the language taught mainly in Chinese communities (Gao, 2017), but China's emerging economy and its global super power status has further triggered what Lo Bianco (2007) describes as a "phenomenal expansion in the teaching and learning of Chinese" (p. 5). This argument finds evidence in the case of Argentina and Chile discussed in this chapter. The authors of the chapter, Evelia Romano, Yu Hwa (Gabriela) Wu and Helena Liu, show that China's emerging economy and improved commercial and political ties with South America have become contributing factors for a reinvigorated interest in Chinese language and culture in Argentina and Chile. In Argentina, which has an assimilationist approach to immigrants and heritage language speakers (Banfi, 2018), Romano, Wu and Liu show that the teaching of Mandarin Chinese has been pioneered by two-way bilingual programmes in Buenos Aires that have allowed for a mix of first-generation Mandarin speakers from mainland China and second-generation Spanish-speaking children of Taiwanese background. Meanwhile, in Chile where several indigenous languages are spoken in the country (e.g. Armaya, Huilliche, Mapudungun, Quechua) (Ethnologue, 2019c), intercultural bilingual education programmes, such as those among the indigenous Mapuche people, have been on the rise (Ortiz, 2009). The authors show how similar intercultural school activities have been developed for teaching Mandarin Chinese under the *Idioma Abre Puertas* [Languages Open Doors] programme. On the other hand, the prospect of Mandarin teaching in Paraguay remains elusive. In a country where the majority of people are bilingual in Guaraní and Spanish and where Guaraní retains a solid level of language maintenance (Gynan, 2007), the teaching of Mandarin has allowed for the inclusion of Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking students. And yet, interest in Mandarin has declined. The authors show that in all three countries, micro-level language policy has worked primarily in Argentina and Paraguay, where language classes are community-driven, whereas a top-down approach to language policymaking is found in Chile. In the three countries, however, issues relating to personnel policy, curriculum policy and materials policy are common.

Hazel Crichton wrote Chap. 13, where she examines early German learning and teaching in the United Kingdom (i.e. England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales). Celebrated as the birthplace of the English language, the UK currently has a highly diverse language ecology. Great Britain in particular is where anthropologist Steven Vertovec (2007) conceptualised his concept of *superdiversity* to describe a diversification of diversity, as evidenced by, among other things, increasing religious diversity (Stringer, 2014) and the emergence of multicultural literature (Rahbek, 2019). The 13 languages (e.g. Cornish, English, Irish, Scots) listed in Ethnologue (2019d) are in competition with hundreds of other languages resulting from an increasing flow of immigrants to the UK. Within such a superdiverse context, a surge of interest in learning Spanish has surpassed the interest in German, while the emergence of China's Confucius Institute has led to an increased prominence of Mandarin Chinese, which has been "transformed from virtual invisibility to privileged status" (McLelland, 2018, p. 18). Crichton notes that despite enjoying quite strong support from interested organisations, such as the Goethe-Institut, in terms of resources and materials policy, early German learning in the UK may only be categorised as



“precarious”. According to Crichton, this issue is attributed to a number of factors occurring at all levels of policymaking. For one, access policy on early language learning is more promising in England and Scotland, where the age and stage of learners have been clearly identified; the same cannot be said of Northern Ireland and Wales. This lack of uniformity in access policy is exacerbated by issues related to (1) community policy, which seems to exist only in Scotland, albeit with unclear directions; (2) curriculum policy, where educational content depends on teacher expertise or enthusiasm rather than curricular guidelines; (3) methodology policy, where aspirations for a communicative approach to teaching are stifled by teachers’ lack of qualifications; and (4) evaluation policy, where little or no evaluation has been conducted on learning progression or a transition to the secondary level. Most troubling of all, according to Crichton, is personnel policy. There is a casual approach to the training of pre-primary and primary teachers of German, which results in a diversity of routes to teaching, making the efficacy of early learning questionable. Overall, Crichton asserts the importance of early learning of German, stating that “learning another language provides children with the tools to become more interculturally aware and linguistically competent”. This is a fitting assertion not only in connection with the growing awareness of the inclusion of a cultural component in the primary curriculum of modern languages in the UK (see Driscoll, Earl & Cable, 2013) but also with the superdiverse context of the UK, where intercultural communication is key (Guo, 2014).

To conclude, this introductory chapter has set the scene for the volume while identifying its focus, rationale and significance. It has shown that early language learning policy has occurred as a result of continuing ideological contestation. The chapter also argues that the field of language policy would be more progressive if it stimulated research into creating conditions that could help teachers and early language learners to succeed. Creating conditions for success in early language learning are imperative in the face of challenges in terms of access, curriculum, evaluation, materials and methodology policies covered in various chapters in this volume. Many of the chapters also highlight the continuing issue of personnel policy, in which teachers are not adequately qualified or prepared to teach young learners, echoing the concerns raised in recent scholarship (e.g. Enever, 2018; Garton & Copland, 2018b; Zein & Garton, 2019). The chapters in this volume also point out challenges in terms of linguistic ecology resulting from the introduction of early language learning into the educational curriculum. Given the complex multilingual settings in which early language learning policies are implemented, the creation of additive policies that can sustain linguistic diversity, promote intercultural relationship and contribute to social harmony represents a common challenge.

It is not my intention in this introductory chapter to discuss these emerging themes in detail; they are covered by Joseph Lo Bianco in Chap. 14, which concludes the volume. Lo Bianco examines common themes emerging in this volume, introduces some theoretical perspectives on policy, reflects on language attitudes and outlines a language planning and policy model.

All in all, early language learning policy is broad in both scope and implementation, and all contributors to this volume have chosen to focus on widely divergent

educational contexts within a range of policy scope. However, early language learning policy remains under-theorised. There is certainly much to investigate, and a volume such as this can only hope to elicit insights into the potential of critical approaches in dealing with the problems facing polities that introduce early language learning. In such an endeavour, the time has come for practitioners, researchers and policymakers to embark on a journey together as we enter a new era of early language learning policy in the twenty-first century.

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**Part I**  
**Providing Access and Strengthening**  
**Community**

## Chapter 2

# Struggling for a Diverse but Fair Policy: Policy Challenges to Implementing English at the Primary School Level in Japan



Yuko Goto Butler

**Abstract** After many false starts, the Japanese government has mandated the teaching of English as an academic subject at the 5th- and 6th-grade levels, beginning in 2020. This means that English is part of the accountability system from the 5th grade until college in Japan. Compared with neighboring Asian countries, the Japanese government has taken slow steps to implement English at the primary-school level, with the process reflecting complicated domestic issues as well as global forces underlying policy decision. This chapter situates primary-school English education policies in the larger societal context in Japan and discusses the challenges to their implementation. There exists a serious mismatch between the policy assumption that English proficiency is a global competency and the realities of day-to-day life in much of Japan. In the context of growing concerns about the nation's decline in its economic and political presence in the world as well as increasing social-economic disparities within Japanese society, centralizing the diverse local practices in primary English education may promote unfairness as long as practical English skills are viewed as representative of global competence and are granted a significant role in the exam-based educational accountability system in Japan.

**Keywords** Language education policy · Japan · Socioeconomic status · Primary education

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## Introduction

After a long dispute, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan finally decided to make English an academic subject at the 5th- and 6th-grade levels beginning in 2020. The pre-2020 program of “foreign language activities” (a de facto English language exploratory program) was pushed down to the 3rd- and 4th-grade levels. The change in policy was made as part of a larger reform program concerning language education from the primary to tertiary education levels. The policy was also partially motivated by a widely held belief that the earlier, the better for foreign language learning, even though that viewpoint is not warranted in light of empirical research (e.g., de Bot, 2014; Muñoz, 2014; Singleton & Pfenninger, 2018). The policy shift signals a desire to respond to perceptions about the importance of English in an increasingly globalized world. According to MEXT (2017a), the new policy has two major goals: improve English proficiency (with an emphasis on practical English skills) as a global language among Japanese citizens and develop a firm identity of what it means to be Japanese through learning a foreign language.

With the rise in political and economic power of China and other neighboring Asian countries, Japanese policymakers have become increasingly concerned about Japan’s declining economic and political stature in the world. Improving Japanese citizens’ English proficiency and developing a stronger Japanese identity are considered indispensable ways for the country to regain its global reputation and confidence. This sentiment is reflected in the government’s two previously mentioned goals. However, there is a serious mismatch between the policy assumption that English proficiency is a necessary global competency and the realities of day-to-day life in much of Japan (Kubota, 2011). Large-scale survey studies (e.g., Terasawa, 2014) have indicated that English is not the primary language used in intercultural communication in Japan and that only a small portion of Japanese citizens have the opportunity to use English for communication. In such a context, where English proficiency and oral communicative skills in particular are perceived by many to be more of an *imagined* global competency (Butler & Iino, 2016), introducing English at the primary school level appears to be largely motivated by, and have consequences for, internal societal matters. Equating English proficiency with global competence also overemphasizes the value of English-speaking bilinguals in Japanese society and does not match the reality of the growing number of non-English-speaking linguistic minority people (e.g., immigrants, foreign residents) in Japan.

One of the most notable ways that English is overemphasized in Japan is its gatekeeper role in students’ access to higher education. English proficiency greatly influences college admissions, regardless of whether students actually need English skills in order to succeed in their studies or careers. In addition, there are growing concerns about the widening gap in living standards and academic achievement among children based on their socioeconomic status (SES) (e.g., Kariya, 2008; Nippon Foundation Children’s Poverty Team, 2016; Matsuoka, 2019). The reality

for many students in Japan is that extra funding and resources are required to access opportunities to use English outside of their schools. This also holds true in some respects at their schools as well. The new policy of making English a compulsory academic subject in primary school is significant for stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, teachers, and policymakers) because it means that primary English education is going to be part of a larger exam-based accountability system in Japan. The present chapter, therefore, aims to situate this new primary school English education policy in its larger societal and educational context in Japan and to analyze the challenges in its implementation.

Compared with Japan's neighboring countries in Asia (Spolsky & Moon, 2012), the Japanese government has been taking very slow steps to implement English at the primary school level. This slow and incremental process reflects complicated domestic issues as well as global forces underlying the policy decision (Cooper, 1989). As I discuss in what follows, local school boards and individual schools have experimented with various types of English-teaching methods for primary school students. A number of materials and textbooks have been produced locally, and unique collaboration efforts have been made between primary and secondary schools regionally while making use of local resources. The new policy centralizes these diverse practices and may appear to ensure equity in access to English. I argue, however, that centralizing current local, diverse practices and evaluating students' performance may result in unfair outcomes as long as practical English skills are believed to be representative of global competence and are granted a significant role in the Japanese educational accountability system and in access to higher education.

The chapter is organized as follows. I first provide historical and societal backgrounds of the policy as well as a summary of the current policy content, followed by analyses of the new policy of English at the primary school level based on Baldauf and Kaplan's (2005) framework of language-in-education policy goals. A particular focus is placed on analyzing the access, methodology, and materials policies in their framework. The chapter concludes with a series of policy implications. In the following discussion, *primary school English* refers to English education conducted at the primary school level, including both English exploratory programs and English as an academic subject.

## Historical and Societal Background of the Policy

Japan is by no means a linguistically homogenous country; a number of minority languages are spoken, including various Ainu and Okinawan (or Ryukyuan) languages, as well as several other languages spoken by long-term and recent immigrants and foreign residents. Unfortunately, both Ainu and Okinawan languages are recognized as endangered languages by UNESCO despite regional revitalization efforts (UNESCO, 2017). Foreign residents have been increasing in number in recent years. The number of foreign residents increased from 2018 to 2019 by approximately three million people. However, they only constitute 2.2% of the

entire population in Japan (Ministry of Justice, 2020), and their language rights are little recognized in public sectors (e.g., schools, public institutions, and workplaces). Japanese monolingualism has been favored in domestic communication (including communication with immigrants themselves), while English education has been strongly promoted among Japanese citizens. English is the predominant foreign language taught at the primary and secondary school levels. For example, in 2014 only 15% of high schools offered foreign languages other than English, and 30% of such schools were private (MEXT, 2016). Foreign language education is de facto synonymous with English education in Japan, including at the primary school level.

Historically, two different approaches to English education have been emphasized alternately over time. One approach has been to focus on English for practical purposes (referred to as *practical English* hereafter) and the second approach focuses on English for academic studies and entrance exams (primarily as a means to access higher education, referred to as *English as a school subject* hereafter). The emphasis on practical English has usually been triggered by external forces, as I have discussed elsewhere (Butler, 2005, 2007).

English education in Japan, as part of the modern education system, started in the late nineteenth century when Japan opened the country to the world after 300 years of a policy of isolation. English initially was associated with modernization (largely an emphasis on Westernization) and was a major means of absorbing information from abroad. Everything related to the West was considered advanced, while traditional Japanese ways were seen as backward. During the initial stage of modernization, learning oral English from native speakers was referred to as a *seisoku* (the regular way), whereas learning English through translating written texts by Japanese teachers of English was referred to as *hensoku* (the irregular way). Signs of the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992)—an influential notion in language teaching that native speakers of the target language are the ideal teachers—are already evident in these terms. After the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and the ensuing rise of Japanese nationalism, however, worship of the West disappeared. As part of this renewed nationalism, the government initiated a policy of “education in Japan through Japanese,” and foreign texts and teachers were gradually replaced by Japanese texts and teachers. English became primarily an academic pursuit and was studied mainly in preparation for college entrance exams, while practical English skills were devalued (Butler & Iino, 2005; Kitao & Kitao, 1995).

During the U.S. occupation of Japan after World War II, there was a renewed emphasis on practical English in Japan. English was embraced as a practical tool for communicating with U.S. military personnel. The *Anglo-Japanese Conversation Manual*, published immediately after World War II (in 1945), sold more than 3.6 million copies. Japan’s educational system was reorganized by the U.S. military government; the 6-3-3-4 system was adopted, where the first 6 and 3 years (primary and middle school education, respectively) were compulsory. Soon after Japan recovered from World War II and established economic and political stability, however, the pendulum swung back to an emphasis on English as a school subject in the educational system. Enrollment rates for entering high schools and colleges



increased, and virtually all Japanese high schools and colleges adopted English as a subject on entrance exams. The exams primarily tested students' mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and reading (often through translation). High scores were regarded as a sign of diligence and effort, traits that were considered equally available to everybody irrespective of background. These traits were also highly valued as a critical qualification for those seeking higher education (Butler & Iino, 2005; Kitao & Kitao, 1995).

The pendulum started swinging back again to an emphasis on practical English in the 1970s. Since the 1970s, criticisms have been repeatedly leveled against exam-oriented English education for its ineffectiveness and failure to meet the needs of a globalizing society. Critics called for more emphasis on practical English, seeing it as a way for Japan to be competitive. Yet another external lever—globalization this time—became a major force for a renewed focus on practical English. A key factor in realizing the promotion of practical English was an influential policy plan (the “Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities”) developed by MEXT in 2003. The major points in this policy included (a) aiming to improve all Japanese nationals' communicative abilities in English (as opposed to focusing on selected students), (b) specifying concrete goals, (c) granting greater autonomy to teachers and local agents, and, most importantly for the present discussion, (d) allowing primary schools to implement “foreign language activities” at their own discretion (Butler & Iino, 2005).

Around the same time, to relax the excessive emphasis on acquiring knowledge rather than creativity and critical thinking, MEXT also implemented *yutori kyoiku* (“relaxed education”). This policy was intended to enhance more individualized and diverse education and to substantially reduce curriculum content and the number of class hours, with the result that adding new subjects (including English at primary school) to the already crowded curriculum became difficult. In line with the relaxed education policy, the Period of Integrated Study was gradually introduced in the primary and secondary school curriculum starting in 2000. The Period of Integrated Study allowed individual teachers to develop interdisciplinary lessons of their own choosing to enhance students' autonomy, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. English activities at primary school, if they were offered at all, were frequently offered during these periods initially. It was during this relatively brief era of relaxed education policy that English education—in the form of optional language exploratory programs—was introduced at the primary school level.

Starting in 2011, after heated debates about whether the relaxed education policy led to lower academic achievement, MEXT reemphasized academic skills in a renewed *Course of Study*. As a result, policies reducing class hours and academic content were rescinded. This was considered the de facto end of the relaxed education policy. As those relaxed policies were reversed in 2011, MEXT made primary school English compulsory for the first time, with the goal of eventually regulating it as an academic subject requiring numerical evaluation of students' language attainment.

## Current Primary English Policies

MEXT (2017a) described the implementation process of English at primary school as having the following four stages:

Stage 1 (English activities at selected experimental schools, 1992–2001)

Stage 2 (English activities as part of Integrated General Studies, 2002–2010)

Stage 3 (Mandated foreign language activities, 2011–2019)

Stage 4 (Mandated foreign language studies as an academic subject, 2020–present)

In other words, the transition from experimenting with English activities to fully implementing English as an academic subject took place over a 30-year period. There has been substantial opposition to these changes as well as support, and various domestic forces have influenced the decision-making processes. MEXT granted great autonomy to local boards of education and schools, especially during the first two stages. One could argue that establishing primary school English at the local level before implementing it nationwide was a calculated tactic, what Lukes (1974) would describe as the government exercising *covert power in action*. Regardless of the motivation, however, this local, piecemeal approach resulted in substantial variability in practice across regions and schools. While making use of feedback from local experiences, the new (Stage 4) MEXT policy aims to centralize these diverse practices by developing a uniform curriculum and materials and offering a top-down, cascade model of professional training<sup>1</sup> for teachers, in addition to existing, local professional development activities.

Based on Baldauf and Kaplan's (2005) framework of language-in-education-policy goals, Table 2.1 summarizes the major elements in the new central policy at Stage 4 as well as local policies undertaken. Limited space does not allow for a detailed discussion of each policy element in Table 2.1. Instead, I will focus on two issues. The first issue concerns the objectives of the new policy (curriculum policy). The second issue concerns the meaning of the policy change regarding English in primary school—from evaluation-free English exploratory programs to a compulsory academic subject—and the fairness issues associated with this change (access policy and evaluation policy).

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<sup>1</sup>The *cascade model* is an indirect, top-down teacher training model where a limited number of selected teachers receive training initially and the training content is gradually passed down to layers of teachers at different local levels (Butler, 2019).

**Table 2.1** Contemporary Primary School English Education policies in Japan

<b>POLICIES</b>	Primary School English language education policies	
	Central policies <sup>a</sup>	Local practices <sup>c</sup>
<b>CURRICULUM</b> <i>Objectives</i>	2011: End of relaxed education (de facto) 2020: <i>New Course of Study</i> enacted Objectives: “to develop the foundation of communication skills” (target to learn 600–700 words; pre-A1 level in Common European Framework of Reference).	1992: Experiments started. Since 2002: Various locally developed curricula and practices. 2020: Centralized curriculum ( <i>New Course of Study</i> )
<b>ACCESS</b> <i>Target grade levels</i>	2002: Selected areas & individual school choice 2011: Grades 5–6 Mandated “Foreign language activities” (English explanatory program) 2020: Grades 3–4 Mandated “Foreign language activities”; Grades 5–6 Mandated “Foreign language as an academic subject”.	Implemented English as an explanatory program 88% (2003) → 97% (by 2007). Most private PSs teach English as an academic subject in 2007; English as an academic subject was implemented among experimental schools and schools with special curricula; some PSs implemented English from Grade 1.
<i>Frequency of instruction</i>	2011: Grades 5–6, 35 lessons per year (45 min. per week). 2020: Grades 3–4, 35 lessons per year; Grades 5–6, 70 lessons per week (how to secure lesson hours is up to local schools e.g., using a module format, using summer vacation time, etc.).	Varies among schools; the majority of schools have 34 lessons per year from Grades 1–4 and 35–69 lessons per year at grade 5 and 6; different types of time allocations have been tried.
<b>PERSONAL</b> <i>Local teachers</i>	Homeroom teachers teach English along with other subjects; selected teachers were trained as “English education promotion leaders”; plans to hire an additional 4000 English teachers by 2020; modifications for certificate requirements for PS teachers (including English components).	Homeroom teachers teach in 91.9% schools; special English teachers in 4.3% schools; 5.4% of PS teachers also obtain English certificates at the secondary school level; 97.0% of local boards of education offer teacher training to teach English to PS teachers in 2017.
<i>Native Eng. speaking teachers (NEST)</i>	Promote NESTs as assistant language teachers (ALTs), including those from the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) program; qualifications vary tremendously.	12,912 NESTs (including 2253 JETs) taught at PSs in 2017; non-JETs were hired locally, but their working. contracts vary; 62.4% of PSs had some lessons by NESTs with varying capacity.

(continued)

**Table 2.1** (continued)

<b>POLICIES</b>	Primary School English language education policies	
<b>METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS</b> <i>Methodology</i>	Grades 3–4: Oral activity-based instruction to promote cross-cultural understanding and to develop foundations for acquiring communication skills Grades 5–6: Systematic English instruction including basic reading and writing activities; promoting metalinguistic awareness of Japanese and English.	Various types of methods have been tested at experimental schools and at local boards of education (e.g., co-teaching among various types of teachers, phonics, and other literacy lessons, Teaching English from Grade 1; Content and Language Integrated Learning [CLIL]; small class size teaching, etc.).
<i>Materials</i>	2009–2011: MEXT developed the supplementary material resource “ <i>Eigo Note</i> (English Note)” for Grades 5–6. 2012: MEXT developed another supplementary resource “Hi Friends!” 2017: MEXT produced additional material for “Hi Friends!” (“Hi, Friends Plus” “Hi, Friends, Story Book”). 2018: MEXT developed a model textbook, which was tentatively used for the transition period; private publishers developed textbooks based on this model. 2019: MEXT approved multiple textbooks developed by private publishers.	Local boards of education and individual schools used MEXT’s supplementary materials and/or developed materials of their own (e.g., “Welcome to Tokyo,” developed by the Tokyo Board of Education); experimental schools reported their results to MEXT (the supplemental materials were not required for use) 2018: Selected public schools started to use the textbook made by MEXT. 2020: Local boards of education choose a textbook from among a list of approved textbooks (use of an approved textbook is required).
<b>RESOURCE</b> <i>budget</i>	MEXT had an annual budget of 1,290,218,000 yen (approx. \$11.7 million) for PS English in 2017. <sup>b</sup> Approximately 50% went to personnel expenses for language aides and language coordinators outside of schools (e.g., NESTs); 25% went to material development.	Local governments have varying budgets and resources.
<b>COMMUNITY</b> <i>involved agencies</i>	Use of local resources (retired English teachers, Japanese with high English proficiency, foreign residents) are encouraged to assist homeroom teachers; Initial training for English Education Promotion leaders by an external foreign agency (a cascade model of teacher training).	Local universities offer pre- and in-service teacher trainings; various types of experiments and research conducted by local researchers and universities; local efforts to collaborate with middle schools (searching for a smoother transition from primary school to secondary school).

(continued)

**Table 2.1** (continued)

<b>POLICIES</b>	Primary School English language education policies	
<b>EVALUATION</b> <i>Assessment</i>	Numeric evaluation of (1) knowledge/skills, (2) thinking/decision-making/expressions, and (3) motivation; Can-Do assessment is encouraged, but no concrete guidelines are provided to teachers (as of 2019).	Various can-do descriptors are developed and used locally; 77.9% of PSs have some forms of Can-Do descriptors in 2017; some schools implement oral performance assessments but practice varies tremendously; tremendous confusion about assessments among teachers.

*Notes:* PSs in this table stand for primary schools

<sup>a</sup>The description refers to the New Course of Study enacted in 2020 unless specified

<sup>b</sup>These figures do not include personal expenses for hiring new special English teachers and foreign ALTs from the JET program

<sup>c</sup>Information is based on a series of reports available on MEXT's website

## Issues with Early Language Learning Policies

### *English as an Imagined Global Competence—Ambiguous Goal Setting*

As mentioned earlier, introducing English at the primary school level was one of the major strategies in MEXT's 2003 action plan to improve citizens' communicative abilities in English. The underlying assumption was that improving peoples' ability to communicate in English—conceptualized as *the* global language—is critical for the nation's survival in the globalized world. Driving the policy was a serious concern that, with the rise of China and other Asian countries, Japan was losing its influence in the world. This concern was evident in the goal statement that Japan should aim to obtain one of the highest scores in Asia in international English proficiency tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT) and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) (MEXT, 2014). The fact that neighboring Asian countries were already teaching English at the primary school level was a strong justification for advocating for English in Japanese primary schools (MEXT, 2015a), although curiously the actual effect of primary school English in other Asian countries was hardly mentioned in any documents that MEXT released to the public.

The influence of parents and other stakeholders on educational policies for young learners cannot be overstated (Enever, 2018). Reflecting a prevailing belief among the general public that “the earlier, the better” is an effective approach to language learning, primary school English was largely welcomed by parents. A large-scale survey (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, 2018,  $n = 7400$ ) indicated that approximately 80% of parents agreed with the new policy in 2017. Primary school teachers also generally subscribed to the notion of “the earlier, the better.” Another large-scale survey (Benesse Educational Research and Development

Institute, 2010,  $n = 4709$ ) indicated that teachers largely agreed with English exploratory programs, ideally starting from the first grade, but that many did not wish to have English as a compulsory academic subject in primary school. The main reasons that teachers disagreed with making English a compulsory academic subject included their belief that primary school children should concentrate on learning Japanese rather than a foreign language and that there is insufficient instructional support for teaching English at this level. It is important to note, however, that there is no empirical proof that the “modest” amount of primary school English education offered (a couple of hours per week) (Johnstone, 2019, p. 19) had a negative influence on children’s first language development. Similarly, a series of empirical studies conducted in foreign language learning contexts have shown repeatedly that earlier introduction of a foreign language does not necessarily lead to higher performance in the target language (e.g., Jaekel et al., 2017; Muñoz, 2014; Ortega, 2009; Singleton & Pfenninger, 2018). Finally, the main stakeholders, young learners themselves, generally indicated that they liked the activities in the English exploratory programs but that they also tended to quickly lose interest (MEXT, 2015b). Children’s decrease in motivation was mainly attributed to a lack of reading and writing elements in the English exploratory programs. These elements were eventually included when English was taught as an academic subject (MEXT, 2015b). Interestingly, primary school teachers’ attitudes about introducing reading and writing appeared to be divided. Those teachers who supported reading and writing instruction in primary school tended to believe that reading and writing activities should be developmentally appropriate for upper-primary grade students and that they are indispensable for English studies at the secondary school level (Ikeda, 2013). Knowing that reading and writing have become critical elements in English at the secondary school level and beyond, one can argue that it is hard for teachers to detach primary school English from the way it is being taught as an academic subject at higher levels.

One of the challenges of promoting communicative English, or practical English, in Japan is that there is a serious mismatch between this goal setting—to improve all Japanese nationals’ practical communicative abilities in English—and the real needs of Japanese learners of English. Terasawa (2014) conducted a series of analyses based on multiple large-scale social research databases. He found that only 2%–3% of Japanese people actually use English regularly; even after including people who use English just a few times a year, the percentage barely reached 20% of the working population and 10% of the entire population. Moreover, despite the common discourse that English is increasingly needed in global business and politics, the actual number of Japanese people who use English decreased from 2006 to 2010 in Terasawa’s analysis, and he speculated that the situation would not drastically change in the near future considering the industry structure and the dominance of Japanese language use in Japan. Furthermore, English proficiency itself did not seem to contribute directly to increases in income and promotions, as is often assumed. Terasawa’s data showed that those who had higher English proficiency tended to have higher annual incomes than those who didn’t, but this was largely due to confounding variables such as educational background. It is not practical

English proficiency per se that determines one's income and career opportunities but English achievement as a ticket to higher education that brings the rise of income and promotion.

Historically speaking, as discussed already, the promotion of practical English has been associated with external forces in Japan. The current discourse often refers to the necessity of high English proficiency among the Japanese because of growing numbers of foreign tourists and residents in Japan as well as the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, which Tokyo is hosting (MEXT, 2014).<sup>2</sup> But the overwhelming majority of foreign tourists and residents in Japan do not come from so-called English-speaking countries. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization (2020), 70.1% of the tourists who visited Japan in 2018 came from East Asia (China, Korea, and Taiwan), and an additional 12.0% were from South East Asia (e.g., Thailand). Regarding foreign residents, in 2019, 27.7% were Chinese, followed by Koreans (15.2%), Vietnamese (14.0%), Filipinos (9.6%), Brazilians (7.2%), and Indonesians (2.3%) (Ministry of Justice, 2020). When it comes to school-age children who need specific Japanese-language assistance, or Japanese-as-a-second-language learners (JSL students), 25.7% were Portuguese speakers and 23.7% were Chinese speakers, followed by Tagalog and other Filipino language speakers (19.5%) and Spanish speakers (9.4%) (MEXT, 2019). None of these statistics justify the claim that English is the critical language for a globalizing Japan. Instead, multilingual competency, especially in Asian languages, appears to be critical. Pan (2015) observed that the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games made the Chinese believe that English was a "hypercentral language" (p. 154) and that it played a critical role by "building a globalized and internationalized China" and "improving the language environment in China and building Beijing as a real international metropolis" (p. 155). Whether the same phenomenon will be observed in Japan, however, is questionable. For the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, the default language on the volunteer application form was English instead of Japanese (or any other language). Organizers might have chosen English as the default language as a way to convey the importance of English abilities for volunteers (even though most volunteers do not need to speak English), but it became a target of criticism by the media (ANN News, September, 2018). Whether the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics become triggers for English learning among Japanese is an empirical question that has yet to be answered.

Under the circumstances just described, the discourse around practical English as a global competence appears to be driven more by an imagined ideal than the reality of day-to-day life in Japan, and it is an ideal that is difficult for most Japanese to conceptualize in a concrete way. Since the ultimate goal of learning English (practical English) is not totally clear, the role of primary school English is left ambiguous as well. Because English is becoming a compulsory academic subject in primary schools in Japan in 2020, MEXT has asked primary school teachers to conduct a numeric evaluation of student performance while leaving unspecified what to evaluate and how to evaluate it. It is indeed hard to set an appropriate and

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<sup>2</sup>The 2020 Olympics and Paralympics were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



realistic goal for foreign language programs in primary school given the modest amount of time allocated to it (currently a couple of hours of instruction per week). However, without substantial exposure to the target language, the advantage of an earlier start in language learning cannot be expected (Muñoz, 2014).

A lack of concrete and realistic goals may create undesirable consequences for children. Johnstone (2019) reminds us that “the children in class have no models of authentic localised ‘children’s English’” (p. 19) in such a context. Teachers’ localized English is often considered inauthentic and undesirable as a model (Butler, 2019). Studies of goal theories and students’ achievement repeatedly show that setting a concrete goal as opposed to a general goal (e.g., “do your best”) is important for students to maintain motivation and achieve higher performance (see Lee & Bong, 2019, for a review of such studies in the language learning domain). In foreign language classrooms, students are often asked to display their performance in front of their classmates so that they can easily compare their performance with that of others. In such an environment, it is important for teachers to help students develop a mastery-oriented goal in which students can focus on their progress against their own goals and maintain high self-efficacy (Lee & Bong, 2019). If teachers cannot provide students with such a goal orientation, “starting early” may have a negative impact on students’ long-term motivation to learn the language.

### ***The Danger of Making Practical English Part of a High-Stakes, Uniform Accountability System***

As a compulsory academic subject, English at the primary school level has become part of the larger uniform accountability system in Japan. MEXT’s promotion of practical English throughout the entire educational system, including during primary school, is being undertaken while English still plays a critical role as an academic pursuit. Critically, testing practical English as part of the exam system potentially imperils fairness among students in Japan’s rapidly changing society (Butler & Iino, 2021).

MEXT’s strong emphasis on practical English is manifested in its college entrance exam reform along with the new policy of English primary education. Starting in 2020 (the same year that English became an academic subject in primary schools), MEXT decided to ask high school students to take external standardized English proficiency tests, such as the English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL iBT) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), as part of the college entrance exam. Note that these tests are not necessarily aligned with the Japanese national curriculum. This policy of using external proficiency tests was motivated by the desire to improve students’ English proficiency, especially their speaking skills (skills that are often considered critical for the nation to be competitive in the global market) (Abe, 2017). In a context where Japanese is used almost exclusively and only limited class hours are allocated to English lessons in school,



students must make a special effort to practice English in order to prepare for these tests. These efforts usually require financial and regional resources going beyond regular school work. Consequently, it is likely that students' socioeconomic status (SES) would be one of the strongest predictors of achieving high scores on these proficiency tests. After receiving substantial criticism, MEXT announced in November 2019 that they were postponing the policy for some time.

With the fear that lowering the starting age of English education may result in an earlier and more intense influence of students' SES on their performance, top-down centralized policies are often intended to create equality of access to English regardless of the students' backgrounds (Butler, 2005; Enever, 2018; Johnstone, 2019). The actual effect of such top-down centralized initiatives, however, appears to be much more complex than policymakers may anticipate. In recent years, there has been increasing awareness that the idea of Japan as an egalitarian society is a myth, and there have also been increasing concerns about growing disparities based on SES. Japan indeed has a high relative poverty rate; it was ranked among the 10 worst countries in the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD, 2015). One in six Japanese children live in poverty (Asahi Newspaper reporters, 2016). While these children may have access to English due to the central policy, the policy also encourages parents who have higher educational backgrounds and who reside in large cities to invest more in their children's English education starting early (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, 2014). A growing number of prestigious private middle schools have already started including English as part of their entrance exams in response to the new MEXT policy (Asahi Newspaper reporters, 2018). Empirical studies from other countries where primary school English had already been implemented have reported in concert that students' SES is correlated with their ability to access opportunities to *practice* English at the primary school level (for a collection of papers on this topic, see a special volume of *System*, 2018 edited by Butler, Sayer, & Huang).

As a foreign exploratory program during the relaxed education period, primary school English in Japan invited local varieties and unique practices. However, this diversity also has become a source of concern for the central government. Some schools focused on cross-cultural understanding, while others were geared more toward language learning. Over the years, local boards of education and individual schools experimented with various types of instructional methods and strategies (some were designated experimental schools and received special professional and financial assistance). Such experiments included coteaching among various types of teachers, phonics and other literacy-related lessons, teaching English from Grade 1, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), smaller classes, and so forth. A variety of materials have been developed locally as well. For example, the Tokyo Board of Education developed its own textbooks, entitled *Welcome to Tokyo*, featuring vocabulary and expressions appropriate for welcoming guests for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. According to MEXT's survey, by 2015, 67.9% of primary schools had developed their own materials in addition to textbooks (MEXT, 2017c). Because English at the primary school level has been carried out largely by relying on local resources, foreign residents and other language minority

residents were often invited to participate in creating lesson plans and materials reflecting community characteristics. The materials they helped create included multicultural and multilingual materials, as opposed to focusing exclusively on English. In addition, 43.4% of primary schools also arranged the content of English instruction to be at least somewhat aligned with the Japanese language arts curriculum (MEXT, 2017c). MEXT has supported some of these local experiments and efforts, but at the same time it has expressed concern with variations in lesson hours and content across regions and emphasized the importance of securing equal access to English education in primary school regardless of students' place of residence (MEXT, 2009).

It is often assumed that top-down policies intended to create equality may not match local needs, while bottom-up policies usually grant greater local autonomy and diversity. Finding “the best way to provide both diversity and equality of access” appears to be a challenge, as Johnstone pointed out (2019, p. 17). But it is also important to note that securing *equal access* does not guarantee *fairness*. When MEXT emphasized English as a school subject in the educational accountability system, it could justify making curriculum and materials uniform, and centralizing practices on the grounds that doing so ensures at least a degree of fairness. In other words, because knowing about the language and understanding how it works (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, and translation skills) in English as a school subject was believed to be an indicator of diligence—which is available to everybody regardless of SES and regional backgrounds—it was seen as a fair goal.<sup>3</sup> However, once practical English skills become a central part of the high-stakes accountability system, those students who have more resources are likely to have an advantage because, as discussed earlier, acquiring practical English skills in the context of Japan usually requires additional resources and motivation going beyond regular school work. Top-down centralized policies may quash the uniqueness of local practices without providing meaningful control over issues related to fairness. There is some evidence that primary school teachers, especially younger teachers, are enthusiastic about developing their own materials and lesson plans for their English classes (Benesse Educational Research and Development Institute, 2010). Centralized curriculum and practice, however, may discourage such enthusiasm and innovation among teachers.

## Implications

I have focused on two issues regarding the new primary school English policy decisions in Japan: the objectives of the policy and the consequences of uniformly making English a compulsory academic subject at the primary school level. These issues correspond to curriculum policy and access and evaluation policies in Baldauf and

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<sup>3</sup>This assumption may not be true, however. Kariya (2008) argued that students' effort making is associated with SES.

Kaplan's (2005) framework, respectively. Based on the discussions above, a couple of policy implications can be drawn.

First, the objectives of Japan's English education policy need to be reconsidered. The assumption that English, as *the* language of global competence, is indispensable for a globalizing Japan does not match the reality in Japan. Recall Terasawa's (2014) series of studies indicating that such discourse is by and large false. What seems to be necessary is the acquisition of multilingual competencies rather than competency exclusively in English. Of course, considering the current limited multilingual resources in the largely Japanese-dominant society, expecting all individuals to become multilingual through school education is unrealistic. As an introduction to multilingualism, English is probably a good candidate. Indeed, there is evidence that Japanese people who have a higher command of English also show more interest in other languages (Terasawa, 2014). However, too much emphasis on English competence throughout the entire education system needs to be questioned. The education system should allow students greater flexibility to learn other languages in addition to English, even before they reach the tertiary level.

English at the primary school level in Japan may be more beneficial as originally conceived—as locally developed exploratory programs—rather than as a uniform school subject, at least until teachers receive sufficient professional training to be English-language teaching specialists. English exploratory programs have plenty of room for incorporating cross-cultural and multilingual awareness activities. Local boards of education and schools have already accumulated a wealth of experience, which often depends on unique local resources. The teachers are in a good position to integrate primary school English with other subjects as well. Of course, the effectiveness of local practices needs to be thoroughly examined, but it would be unfortunate if all these local efforts were washed away by the imposition of uniform English language instruction. The overwhelming majority of primary school teachers in Japan were not originally trained as English teaching specialists, and their English proficiency is largely considered inadequate. Only 1% of primary school teachers obtain Grade Pre-1 in the Eiken Test of Practical English Proficiency (roughly corresponding to B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference [CEFR]). As a result, primary school teachers often depend heavily on native English-speaking assistant teachers in class (MEXT, 2015c). It is with this reality in mind that making English a compulsory academic subject (as opposed to English language awareness and cross-cultural awareness programs) before training local teachers to have sufficient English proficiency could promote an *English native fallacy* in young minds. This is an empirical question, but it is worth monitoring closely.

Second, it would be better not to incorporate practical English as part of the accountability system. More specifically, practical English should not be used as a gatekeeper to higher education because it structurally works against students from lower SES backgrounds in Japan. One may also speculate that language minority children often come from lower SES backgrounds as well, though no reliable statistics are currently available on this point. Perhaps the distinction between English as a school subject (i.e., knowledge about the language) and English as a practical communicative skill is becoming increasingly meaningless because English as a

school subject does not have any real significance outside of the Japanese educational system; language education should focus on how to use the language rather than solely acquiring knowledge about the language. In any event, the primary purpose of learning English should not be to pass exams at school, which is the top reason middle school students cite for why they learn English (MEXT, 2015c). Ceasing to use English as a gatekeeper for higher education would allow schools to create opportunities for students to learn other foreign languages as well.

## Conclusion

Foreign language education policies are deeply embedded in specific local societal and historical contexts, making it impossible to discuss language-in-education policies in isolation (Cooper, 1989). In this chapter, I situated Japan's new primary school English education policy in larger societal and historical contexts and discussed potential issues associated with its implementation. The premise underlying the policy—that English proficiency is an indispensable global competency—does not meet the real needs or day-to-day realities of the vast majority of Japanese students. English education at the primary school level, which started as exploratory programs in Japan, has invited diverse but unique localized practices. Policymakers viewed this diversity of practices as a potential threat to equal access to English language education and in response have called for a centralized and uniform curriculum and implementation of English as an academic subject with numerical evaluation requirements. It is important to keep in mind, however, that there is a growing need for multilingualism as well as an increase in socioeconomic disparities within Japanese society. Within this context, centralizing locally diverse practices in primary school English education may result in unfair outcomes as long as practical English skills are believed to represent global competence and are granted a significant role in the exam-based educational accountability system in Japan. This is because acquiring practical English skills usually requires substantial resources beyond regular school work. Detaching English from the exam system would open doors for creative and unique practices while taking advantage of local resources. Considering the current social conditions in Japan, schools could make use of diverse languages and cultures rather than focus exclusively on English.

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# Chapter 3

## Early Childhood Foreign Language Learning and Teaching in Serbia: A Critical Overview of Language Education Policy and Planning in Varying Historical Contexts



Jelena Filipović and Ljiljana Djurić

**Abstract** Language education policy in Serbia, from the early days of formal education (second half of the nineteenth century) onwards, has until recently been investigated as a top-down, institutional, managerial activity (Spolsky B, *Language management*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009; Filipović J, Transdisciplinary approach to language study: the complexity theory perspective. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015a; Filipović J, *Filološki pregled/Revue de Philologie* 42:41–52, 2015b; Filipović J, *Jezici i kulture u vremenu i prostoru* 4:367–373, 2015c; Filipović J, *Lingvistika i teorija kompleksnosti. jezičko liderstvo kao intergralni deo jezičke politike i planiranja u 21. veku* [Linguistics and complexity theory: language leadership as an integral part of language policy and planning in the 21st century]. In: Gudurić S, Stefanović M (ur) *Jezici i kulture u vremenu i prostoru V* [Languages and cultures in time and space V]. Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu, Novi Sad, pp 623–636, 2016; Filipović J, *Jezik, standardizacija, standardnojezička kultura i jezička politika i planiranje* [Language, standardization, standard language culture and language policy and planning]. *Glasnik odjeljenja društvenih nauka* [Journal of the Department of Social Sciences of the Montenegrin Academy of Arts and Sciences], 23:217–231. CANU (Montenegrin Academy of Arts and Sciences), 2017a), which takes into account language and overall ideologies of policy planners/language managers (Filipović J, Transdisciplinary approach to language study: the complexity theory perspective. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015a; Filipović J, *Moć reči: Ogledi iz kritičke sociolingvistike. 2. dopunjeno i prošireno izdanje* [The social power of words: essays on critical sociolinguistics, 2nd extended and revised edition]. Zadužbina Andrejević, Beograd, 2018; Djurić LJ, *Strani jezici u obrazovnoj politici Srbije* [Foreign languages in Serbian educational policy]. Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade

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Press, Belgrade, 2016), their epistemological as well as personal and collective strategic interests. In this paper, we contrast the aforementioned approach (macro-level) with the micro-level language policy (Liddicoat AJ, Baldauf Jr RB, *Language planning and policy: language planning in local contexts*. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 2008) focusing on early childhood foreign language policy and planning as illustrative of the overall trajectory of Serbian language education policy. We analyze it against the backdrop of the general history of Serbian foreign language education policies, with an emphasis on teaching English as a foreign language in this country (due to its special status as the global lingua franca). We offer examples of good practices at the micro-level (i.e., of individual or group engagement) in the form of language leadership (Filipović J, *Transdisciplinary approach to language study: the complexity theory perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015a; Filipović J, *Filološki pregled/Revue de Philologie* 42:41–52, 2015b; Filipović J, *Lingvistika i teorija kompleksnosti. jezičko liderstvo kao intergralni deo jezičke politike i planiranja u 21. veku* [Linguistics and complexity theory: language leadership as an integral part of language policy and planning in the 21st century]. In: Gudurić S, Stefanović M (ur) *Jeziči i kulture u vremenu i prostoru V* [Languages and cultures in time and space V]. Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu, Novi Sad, pp 623–636, 2016; Filipović J, *Jezik, standardizacija, standardnojezička kultura i jezička politika i planiranje* [Language, standardization, standard language culture and language policy and planning]. *Glasnik odjeljenja društvenih nauka* [Journal of the Department of Social Sciences of the Montenegrin Academy of Arts and Sciences], 23:217–231. CANU (Montenegrin Academy of Arts and Sciences), 2017a; Filipović J, *Moć reči: Ogledi iz kritičke sociolingvistike. 2. dopunjeno i prošireno izdanje* [The social power of words: Essays on critical sociolinguistics, 2nd extended and revised edition]. Zadužbina Andrejević, Beograd, 2018), which might serve as guidelines for future focused and effective language policy and planning.

**Keywords** Foreign language education policy · Early childhood education · Macro- and microlevel language policy and planning · English as a foreign language · Language ideology · Language leadership · Serbia

## Introduction

Language education policy is often defined as an integral part and one of the most important instruments of general language policy and planning, as well as of public policies created and carried out by institutions of the state. In this paper language education policy is understood as an interdisciplinary and socially engaged research area, which allows us to take a critical look at both de jure and de facto perspectives in the area of language education policy. It also enables us to interpret and understand their consequences in this area of social life and within varied contexts of

general educational policies in the area of early childhood education. Despite early claims of some of its founders from the 1960s that language policy and planning should be understood and carried out as an objective, structural linguistics-driven activity (Ricento, 2000, p. 11), it has been demonstrated many times that it stands in direct correlation with specific sociohistorical contexts, epistemological orientations, and strategies of academic research in particular political entities, normally defined as nation-states (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008; Ricento, 2000, 2006; Blommaert, 2006; Geeraerts, 2003; Bugarski, 2005; Filipović, 2014, 2015a, b, 2016, 2017a, b). Moreover, beliefs and ideologies of language planners play a significant part in the decision-making process: “This view of language planning locates research within a theory of power which sees the top-down exercise of power (or domination) as the relevant construct for understanding decision-making about languages” (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008, p. 3).

Herein, we attempt to analyze language policy and planning as a form of language leadership that is based on the agency of all interested parties (e.g., students, teachers, local and regional communities). In that sense, we relate language leadership to microlevel language policy and planning (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008) in which all actors “share a similar world ideology, work ethics and intercultural competence along with their methodological knowledge and experience, which helps them define a set of practices, articulate a list of demands and make sure that they are being heard and taken into consideration in any process of foreign language education policy change or update” (Filipović, 2015a, p. 113). Serbian early childhood foreign language (FL) education policy, which is the main focus of this research, in our opinion very successfully illustrates the relevance of the issues outlined in this introductory section.

## Serbian Linguistic Ecology and Language Education Policy and Planning

Serbia has always been a multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual region. Not going too far back into the past, in the days when its parts belonged to the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires,<sup>1</sup> a specific type of *diglossia* involving Serbian varieties had existed (Serbian Church Slavonic existing as the H variety, spoken by the clergy and a small number of educated individuals in the North, and a wide range of South Slavic vernacular dialects, L varieties spoken by the large majority of ethnic Serbs; see Radovanović, 2000; Gardiner, 1984, for further details). Upon the creation of the Serbian state in the second half of the nineteenth century, and in all the

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<sup>1</sup>Parts of Serbia became independent from the Ottoman rule in the second half of the nineteenth century, while other parts (in present-day Northern Serbia in the Vojvodina region) became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after the World War I (1919) and the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

consecutive states that existed in the territory of present-day Serbia<sup>2</sup>, multilingualism has been the norm rather than an exception for the majority of ethnic groups living in its territory. Aside from Serbo-Croatian (now split into three or four *ausbau* standards: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian; see Radovanović, 2000, for further discussion), two other standard languages, which are also official languages of the associated nation-states, have been consistently present since 1945 and 1919, respectively: Macedonian (Republic of Northern Macedonia) and Slovene (Slovenia).

In addition to the official nation-state languages, there exists a large number of languages spoken by ethnic minorities, which have cohabited this region for centuries. According to the Serbian 2011 census, in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the Serbs represent the majority population (6 million, or 83.3%), followed by Hungarians (253,900 or 3.5%), Roma (147,600 or 2.1%), and Bosniaks (145,300 or 2.0%), while a number of ethnic groups compose less than 1% each of the total population: Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Montenegrins, Vlachs, and others (Rudaški, 2013). Article 10 of the constitution of the Republic of Serbia<sup>3</sup> (2006) identifies the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script as the official means of communication in the country. Furthermore, language use in different communicative domains and in different socioethnic contexts is more closely defined by two laws:

1. *Law on Languages and Scripts* of the Republic of Serbia.<sup>4</sup> Article 11 of this law stipulates the rights of all minorities to use their first language (L1) in administrative, public, and political domains as well as in de jure linguistic landscapes in the territories where they live.
2. Article 13 of the *Law on Protection of Freedoms and Rights of National Minorities*<sup>5</sup> specifies that each member of each ethnic minority has the right to education in their L1 (Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Hungarian, Rumanian, Romani, Rysin, Slovak, and Vlach) (see Filipović et al., 2007 for a detailed account) with compulsory teaching and learning of Serbian as the official language of the state.

And finally, the Serbian education system provides for institutional learning and teaching of FLs: the first FL is introduced in grade 1 and the second FL in grade 5 of elementary school (student ages 7 and 11, respectively). Six FLs are incorporated into the state curriculum: English, French, German, Russian, Italian, and Spanish.

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<sup>2</sup>Please, see section “Language education policy, foreign language instruction, and dominant language ideology” of this paper for a chronological outline.

<sup>3</sup>Ustav Republike Srbije: [https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/ustav\\_republike\\_srbije.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/ustav_republike_srbije.html)

<sup>4</sup>*Zakon o službenoj upotrebi jezika i pisama* (Službeni glasnik RS [Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia] No. 45/91, 53/93, 67/93, 48/94, 101/2005, 30/2020 and 48/2018), [https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_sluzbenoj\\_upotrebi\\_jezika\\_i\\_pisama.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_sluzbenoj_upotrebi_jezika_i_pisama.html)

<sup>5</sup>*Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina* (Službeni glasnik RS [Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia], No. 72/2009, 97/2013, 47/2018), [https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon\\_o\\_zastiti\\_prava\\_i\\_sloboda\\_nacionalnih\\_manjina.html](https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_zastiti_prava_i_sloboda_nacionalnih_manjina.html)

Previous relevant research on Serbian language education policies in general and early language learning and teaching in particular (Filipović et al., 2006, 2007, 2010; Filipović, 2015b, 2017b) indicates that it would be safe to say that there has been no serious SLA data-driven research in Serbia<sup>6</sup> that would either yield support to or refute the language acquisition hypothesis of “the younger the better” (see, e.g., Cadierno & Eskildsen, 2018, for a detailed account of the pros and cons of this hypothesis). Language education policies have so far been examined only in terms of “norms and expectations for the ways in which languages are used in local communities,” i.e., on the macro- level of national institutions (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008, p. 11). In other words, no deeper analysis of microlevel language policy and planning has been carried out which would look into ways in which “macro-level policy is transmitted (...) to a local context” (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008, p. 11).

That is precisely why in what follows an attempt is made to establish a constructive and substantial connection between the macro and the microlevels in Serbian language education policy (especially in the area of early FL instruction). This is important in order to account for a painfully visible discrepancy of expected and accomplished goals of the macro-level planning, on the one hand; and to illustrate the strength and potential of culturally and historically contextualized micro-level language policy and planning, on the other hand. This might help future language planners to start thinking and acting not as managers, but rather as leaders (Filipović, 2015a, b) in the process of establishing critical links between the general narratives of institutional documents and policy papers, and local needs and initiatives. Moreover, this paper is written in an attempt to draw systematic attention to a number of aspects of language education policy in general, and toward FLs in particular in terms of access, personnel, curriculum, methodology and materials, resourcing, community, and evaluation policies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005, p. 1014), which would help language policy makers avoid ad-hoc decisions based on day-to-day shifts in political will and power relations (Djurić, 2016, pp. 438–440).

Our account of specific examples of micro-level Serbian early language education policies does not pretend to be comprehensive, but rather illustrative of the positive effects of individual and collective leadership based on clearly specified cultural and educational needs of specific communities of practice in concrete points in time and space in the Serbian past and present. Fully conscious that we are stepping away from one of the key arguments of the present volume, we have opted not to discuss “the younger the better” hypothesis in FL instruction in Serbia, precisely due to the fact that extended, longitudinal data-driven empirical research is needed if any serious and valid academic conclusions are to be drawn and presented

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<sup>6</sup>The only empirical research that we are aware of dates back to 1963, and describes a 1 year long study (1960–61) carried out in a primary school in Belgrade, which systematically compared learning outcomes in English as foreign languages among students from grade 1 and grade 3 of primary education. The author concludes, that, in spite her initial hypothesis that later onset in foreign language learning assures better results, it is the early starters who yield better results than those who are introduced to foreign language teaching at a somewhat later age (Stošić, 1963: 211, according to Djurić, 2019a: 69).

to the international public. We do, however, make references to a quasi-academic debate on early childhood FL learning in our account of the Serbian FL education policy design and development in the twenty-first century in order to illustrate critical discrepancies between language and overall ideologies of the language managers on the one hand, and experts in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and FL learning and teaching on the other hand.

## Language Education Policy, Foreign Language Instruction, and Dominant Language Ideology

We would like to start by generalizing the statement made by Lippi-Green in 1994, in an article on standard language ideology, by saying that most language ideologies are “part of a greater power construct, a set of social practices on which people depend without close analysis of underlying assumptions” (p. 166). Official language planners in Eurocentric cultural contexts, aside from favoring standard languages and insisting on monolingualism through processes in which “(s)tates and their ruling elites attempted to enforce monolingualism among their citizens through linguistic standardization (...) by valorizing ‘authenticity’ on the one hand and ‘rational universality’ on the other” (Gal, 2011, p. 34), have for the longest time insisted on the creation of top-down FL education policies based on centuries-old concepts of European modernity (see Filipović, 2015a, b, c; Bauman & Briggs, 2003, among others, for further discussion). Consequently, only a small number of languages that are politically, socially, and historically dominant in certain geopolitical regions show up as FLs in formal educational systems: the concept of plurilingualism in education and communication (as proposed by the Council of Europe in different editions of the *Framework*<sup>7</sup>) remains an idealistic construct in many European societies as long as issues related to the political and socioeconomic power of languages are not recognized and seriously taken into account (Filipović, 2018: 163), as ... language teaching is “generally the quest for power that enters into the equation whether people demand to learn a language or whether some powerful entity, such as the state, makes policies to teach it” (Rahman, 2001, p. 56).

It is safe to assert that in most cases and in most countries, language education policies have been carried out as a top-down activity, “an activity undertaken by the state” in order to “implement or promote such policy that is explicitly stated or sometimes left implicit” (Ho & Wong, 2000, p. 1, cited in Siew Kheng Chua, 2008, p. 184). The top-down activity has been based on language management, defined as “... the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs”

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<sup>7</sup>Council of Europe. 2001. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Companion volume with new descriptors. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

(Spolsky, 2009: 5), which is inherently dependent on the function of “a language manager, which stands in hierarchical relationship with other ... human agents within the same community of practice/speech community/society” (Filipović, 2015a, b, c, p. 45). Translated to the field of language education policy, the preceding discussion implies that ALL language teaching in formal education within the Eurocentric cultural cognitive model (e.g., L1, L2, FLs, regional or minority languages) almost always represents a clear reflection of the scientific, social, and political orientations of the language planners/language managers designated by the institutions of the state.

Of course, it is worth noting that proposals to create bottom-up, grassroots policies have been made in a number of countries, especially in higher education (see, e.g., Airey et al., 2017, for an example of an attempt to create university-based policies for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) in Nordic countries, or Menken and García (eds.), 2010, for case studies examining the role of educators as policy makers in a number of countries across the world). However, as the case study of FL education in Serbia illustrates, language ideologies<sup>8</sup> governing educational planners’ decisions encompass both FLs and national, standard languages<sup>9</sup> alike. In other words, in Serbia, top-down, macrolevel, centralized language policy design and implementation is operational, based on a sociopolitically and economically defined hierarchy of importance, relevance, and distribution of FLs present in formal education at all educational levels. Moreover, our research (Filipović et al., 2007, 2010) indicates that Ricento’s (2000) claims that implicit objectives often significantly differ from explicit statements in official language policy documents is valid for Serbia as well. In other words, Serbian language planners/language managers are more often than not guided by strategic and sociopolitical rather than epistemological factors in their decision-making process. Consequently, macrolevel language policy and planning very often do not take into account sociocultural and affective positions of local and regional ethnic and cultural or religious communities and do not satisfy their needs for a varied and purposeful microlevel language planning framework.

The situation seems to be similar to that in other countries. For instance, the overarching consequence of the foregoing arguments is a large number of foreign/second language education policies that favor teaching and learning of English as either an L2 or as a vehicular language in teaching some or all school subjects (EMI). As Hornberger (2002, p. 40) notes that “(t)he challenge of popular demand

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<sup>8</sup>We understand language ideologies as social constructs “about language, its structure, functions and values, (which) also form conventional cognitive representations of linguistic phenomena in a given social/cultural (speech) community” (Filipović, 2015a, b, c: 27).

<sup>9</sup>Herein, we refer to the so-called standard language cultures (Milroy, 2001) which are the outcome of a one language—one nation—one state ideology of language policy (e.g., Hornberger, 2002; Filipović, 2015a, 2017a, 2018; Geeraerts, 2003; Bugarski, 2005), in which “linguistic culture is the standard language culture, that is, the common culture ... Language management is deeply and inherently interconnected with the construct of standard language cultures and the macro-sociopolitical and historical circumstances which have been at the core of this (I daresay predominant) type of language standardization process” (Filipović, 2015a: 48).

for the societal language of power is a very real one in contexts all over the world, one not to be lightly dismissed.” In Europe and other parts of the world, this type of English-only-oriented FL education policy has been taking us farther away from the overt plurilingualism-oriented objectives of the European language policymakers who have been insisting on the presence of at least two FLs in formal education for over two decades now.<sup>10</sup> In all cases, English as an unprecedented global lingua franca is recognized as a gateway to social mobility in terms of reaching one’s optimal professional and academic development, thus placing all other languages in its shadow (e.g., see Hornberger, 2002; Hornberger & Cassels Johnson, 2007 for a detailed discussion of South America, USA, and Bolivia). In the European Union, according to the 2017 Eurostat data ([http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Foreign\\_language\\_learning\\_in\\_the\\_European\\_Union\\_\(Data\\_from\\_2015\)\\_final.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Foreign_language_learning_in_the_European_Union_(Data_from_2015)_final.png)), 59% of all European citizens learn at least two FLs, among which English is, as expected, at the top of the list, with 96% of all learners, followed by French (23%), Spanish (22%), German (19%), Italian (3%), and Russian (2%). Even though these numbers seem encouraging at first sight, it should be pointed out that the overall number of FL learners only slightly surpasses half of the total population of the European Union,<sup>11</sup> which clearly indicates that if systematic attention is not paid to the development and implementation of multilingual language education policies at the level of state, regional, and local educational policies, plurilingualism will remain a privilege of the economic and social (normally highly educated) elite in all European states both inside and outside of the EU.

And this brings us to the main topic of this paper: the past, present, and future of Serbian early childhood FL education policy. To illustrate the significance of incorporating foreign languages into every student’s formal education, we focus on compulsory language learning and teaching as defined by state curricula at different times in the history of Serbian formal education. Needless to say, central to our focus are students’ ages in which languages are introduced into curricula within different sociopolitical and cultural contexts. Furthermore, to define Serbian education language policy in a way that best meets the needs of its population, we try to identify, analyze, and interpret a sociocultural context that shapes them. And in doing so, we strive to define short-, medium-, and long-term overall national and educational strategic objectives.

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<sup>10</sup>For detailed information, visit the following sites:

The council of Europe and Language education, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/language-policy-in-the-council-of-europe>

European Center for Modern Languages (ECML), <https://www.ecml.at>

<sup>11</sup>We do not have reliable data regarding foreign language learning in the EU after Brexit. Three years ago, Modiano (2017: 312) hypothesized that “the exit of Britain from the Union will clear the sociolinguistic space for the emergence of an authentic European English, used by members of the EU as a ‘second language’ or (even) a quasi-Outer Circle English, serving the needs of the European Union as the common link language for administration and cooperation between member states”, which might imply that the distribution of foreign language teaching in Europe might tilt even more toward English as a European lingua franca.



For instance, if one of those objectives is for Serbia to become a member of a “large European family under one roof” as proposed by Bugarski (2005), then we must pay close attention to the role of English as a FL in relationship to teaching and learning other European and non-European languages in our formal educational settings. We can state even at this early point in the discussion that we believe that there is a strong lack of serious and comprehensive effort on the part of language planners to make provisions for a systematic implementation of greatly needed early FL education policies in Serbia. On the one hand, Serbia needs to create contexts for strategic recognition and implementation of bottom-up language education policies based on individual multilingualism (often called *plurilingualism* by European educational planners (Council of Europe, 2001, 2003), NPLD, online document) in correlation with local and regional social, cultural, economic, demographic, and psychological and affective needs of individual students. On the other hand, the government needs to make sure that teaching and learning environments are created that promote formal and informal language learning and language use (of L1, L2 (often called minority languages), diverse foreign languages, not only English) in purposeful communicative contexts in a variety of settings throughout all the compulsory education cycles (primary and secondary education) which would “promote languages for different types of mobility; international mobility in which *lingua franca* languages and transnational languages play a determinant role along with cross-border regional mobility in which regional and minority languages represent an added value” (NPLD, p. 4).

## Serbian Foreign Language Education Policy: Overview and Historical Trajectory

From the preceding discussion we conclude that there is a need to redefine the present-day Serbian language education policy in a way that best meets the needs of the Serbian population. To do so, we need to identify, analyze, and interpret the sociocultural context in which such a policy should be created. This brings us to the statement that we need to define short-, medium-, and long-term overall national and educational strategic objectives.

To better understand the current state of affairs and new approaches based on examples of good practice in microlevel FL education policies in time and space, we first need to outline the history of Serbian language education policies in general, with special emphasis on early FL instruction.

### (a) *Historical trajectory of Serbian language education policies*

The history of FL education and language education policy in Serbia can be divided into several historical and easily identifiable periods:

1. Dukedom of Serbia and Kingdom of Serbia (1814–1918);

2. Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941);
3. Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1992), Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (1992–2003);
4. State Union of Serbia and Montenegro (2003–2005); and
5. Republic of Serbia (2006–present) (Cox, 2002).

After a brief outline of the overall diachronic trajectory of FL teaching in this country, the last two periods (2000<sup>12</sup>–present) will be presented as a case study in early childhood foreign language education. This will shed light on the intrinsic relationship between language education policy and social, political and epistemological factors which must be taken into account in every analysis of educational and other public policies. In general terms, we focus on establishing connections between the overall historical and cultural contexts and concrete micro-level early language education policy and planning as an outcome of specific needs identified by individuals or interested communities of practice at local and regional levels.

The term *early education* (when referring to foreign languages) is relatively difficult to pin down (see Djurić, 2019a, for further discussion). We propose to retain Jean-Pierre Cuq’s definition because it fits quite well with the situation in Serbia:

This term characterizes the teaching of a foreign or second language to young school audiences in primary school and kindergarten (also called pre-secondary, pre-primary or pre-school education). It emphasizes a new situation in relation to the reference school situation, (normally) that of secondary education, by introducing, earlier than the school tradition, the teaching-learning of a new idiom in the curriculum of the compulsory school.<sup>13</sup> (Cuq 2003, p. 199)

For the purpose of our analysis, we will consider a “new situation” as a variable factor ranging from the fifth year of schooling (students aged 10–11) before World War II and in socialist Yugoslavia to compulsory preschool and first grade FL teaching (students aged 6–7) in the twenty-first century. Consequently, we place a special emphasis in our analysis on the initial stage of FL instruction, even when we cannot define it as early childhood education. But we can be certain that early childhood education is most definitely a “new situation in relation to the reference school situation” at a given point in time, with an assumption that it represents an interesting example of the all-encompassing, overarching cultural and political transition from premodern (Eastern, Ottoman) tradition toward European modernity in Serbia,

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<sup>12</sup>The year 2000 was taken as the cut-off point, as a year of democratic changes in Serbia, followed immediately by the largest comprehensive educational reform in the country (2000–2003), which was interrupted by the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić (March 12, 2003).

<sup>13</sup>Ce qualificatif caractérise l’enseignement d’une langue étrangère ou seconde à de jeunes publics scolaires dans le cadre de l’école primaire et de l’école maternelle (on dit aussi enseignement pré-secondaire, pré-élémentaire ou pré-scolaire). Il souligne une situation nouvelle par rapport à la situation scolaire de référence, celle du secondaire, en introduisant, plus tôt que ne le prévoyait la tradition scolaire, l’enseignement-apprentissage d’un nouvel idiome dans le cursus de l’école obligatoire. (Cuq, 2003, 199)

which is typical of most Southeastern European countries. As Perović (2006, p. 384) attests, the conflict between tradition and modernity runs

from the establishment of the (Serbian) independent state ... to the creation of the Yugoslav state .... Opening and closing, liberation and fear of freedom are parallel and turn-taking reflexes of the above mentioned conflict affecting the Serbian intellectual elite. The demarcation line does not go between the elite and the people, but within it (the elite) (p. 384).

Formal instruction of FLs in Serbia can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. This specifically refers to the times of construction of the Serbian nation-state after a centuries-long domination of the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg monarchy in different parts of present-day Serbia, which, roughly speaking, corresponds to a geographic divide: the Ottoman Empire to the south and the Habsburg monarchy to the north of the Sava and Danube rivers. Even before the formal recognition of the Serbian state at the Berlin Congress in 1878, Duke Miloš Obrenović issued in 1859 a decree granting general human rights to all citizens of Serbia, which marks the beginning of compulsory formal education in the country,<sup>14</sup> almost immediately followed by the inclusion of socially and politically relevant FLs (Djurić, 2016, p. 86).

In other words, a strategic attempt to create a monolingual state with a newly standardized Serbian language dominant in all communicative domains (see Filipović, 2015a, b, c for a detailed account) and to introduce general literacy in a country consisting of mainly rural, poor, and uneducated population cannot be separated from the consequences of contacts with other European nation-states whose languages very soon find their place in the formal educational context and contribute to the modernization of Serbian society (Djurić, 2016, p. 86). For instance, the presence of German and Latin<sup>15</sup> in secondary education was inserted in the national curriculum as early as 1888 (Djurović, 2003, p. 158). Foreign languages seem to have played a significant role in military education at the turn of the century as well. The modernization of military education in service to the general community has been identified in the literature, which recognizes a systematic effort by public policy planners to “export” young and promising intellectuals (not only military officers, but also medical doctors, pharmacists, engineers, land surveyors, and others) to be trained at foreign universities in France, Germany, Austria, and Russia (Bjelajac, 2003, pp. 170–171). Turkish and Albanian were taught in Serbian

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<sup>14</sup>The first official law on education in Serbia that enforced 6 years of compulsory primary education was introduced in 1882. However, the law also stipulated that certain expenses should be covered by students’ parents or caretakers, which is probably why in the early twentieth century only every fourth child in Serbia attended primary school (see Djurić, 2016, 2019b, for a detailed account).

<sup>15</sup>Classical languages were, of course, present in various forms in previous stages of formal education in Serbia (Ignjačević, 2006: 82). As far back as 1863, the literature on this subject records a “small war” that broke out between scholars favoring humanistically oriented secondary education (gymnasium) and those who argued for a larger presence of the so-called real subjects relevant to that particular historical period, which led to the exclusion of Classical Greek in some high schools in northern Serbia (Ignjačević, 2006).

military schools for a short period at the end of the nineteenth century, with little success (Milićević & Šaljić, 2011, pp. 170–176). The failure to assure quality and sustainable instruction of these two languages can be interpreted as one of the consequences of striving for the “nation-state-language Holy Trinity” (Bugarski, 2005, 2009) typical of European newly founded nation-states and the spread of the language ideology of modernity (Filipović, 2015a, b, c; Bauman & Briggs, 2003), which disfavors regional and minority languages and creates a significantly privileged space for languages of politically and culturally dominant but geographically relatively distant countries (Djurić, 2016, p. 111).

Finally, when discussing the place and function of FLs in the first period of Serbian formal education, it is necessary to take a look at the education of young women. Superior Women’s School (*Visoka ženska škola*, 1863–1913) is not only an example of the progressiveness of general Serbian educational policies but also an excellent illustration of an attempt of educational planners to strike a balance between the aspiration to modernity and the need to respect the dominant patriarchal and traditional cultural models. Perović (2006) concludes that modernization

was gradual, and there was a clear limit to which it could be carried out. At each degree of modernization, patrimonies of western European civilization were being adopted. But not the western European culture which affected religion, social and political philosophy and national ideology. (p. 304)

Classical languages (Ancient Greek and Latin) were present since the establishment of schools, while modern foreign languages (French, German, and Russian) were included as electives in 1879, and English became an optional subject in 1899 (Perović, 2006, pp. 281–295).

In the following period (1918–1941), FL education in Serbia followed the general sociopolitical and cultural orientation of the country, with even slight differentiation from one region of the country to the next. Some general trends, however, emerged. Filipović et al. (2007) report that in early twentieth century, French was made compulsory in most schools for students 10–12 years old. Furthermore, between World War I and World War II, “French was also the most commonly taught foreign language (taught to all students of ages 10–18), while German was present as the second most commonly taught language (taught to all students in grades corresponding to ages 14–18)” (Filipović et al., 2007, p. 232). It should also be pointed out that FL education between the two world wars was a privilege of the elites. It was carried out in private bilingual schools, by private tutors in the home, or in other countries (Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, France), all paid for by wealthy parents who recognized the relevance of multilingualism and multiculturalism (Djurić, 2018, pp. 202–203).

Upon an early post-World War II break-up with the Soviet Union (1948), the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia designed a series of political documents that explicitly refer to the status and role of FLs in formal education in all Yugoslav republics, affirming the dominance of the management-based, macrolevel language policy model. In 1949, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party voted on a resolution that defined the basis for future formal

education in the country. The resolution specifically referred to teaching and learning of FLs as the means to overcome the gap between the progressive world and Yugoslavia in light of the recent conflict with the (retrograde) politics of the Soviet Union (see Djurić, 2016, for a detailed account). Four languages were introduced into upper primary and all throughout secondary education as compulsory elective subjects: English, French, German, and Russian.<sup>16</sup> The question of language(s) of education also received greater attention during the 1950s. Languages of regional and national minorities were implemented as languages of education in bilingual communities (especially in Vojvodina and in Kosovo), while traces of very progressive thinking about bilingual education, and even Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) were present in microlevel grassroots language education policies carried out in smaller communities (e.g., in a small town of Bečej in Vojvodina, a local high school started an experimental program of teaching geography in German in 1956; see Djurić, 2016, for a detailed account). This stage in FL policy development in Serbia can be defined as a shift in overall educational policies, which in the late 1950s and during the 1960s allowed for a certain degree of decentralization of policy design and implementation. Local school authorities and parent unions were given limited rights in terms of choice of foreign languages offered and taught at local and regional levels across the country. However, a strong state-coordinated effort to overtly equalize the presence of all four foreign languages<sup>17</sup> had a prominent presence during that period. This despite the fact that the *Manual for Implementing the Bylaws for Implementation of Foreign Language Curricula of the Republic of Serbia* from 1961 clearly states that English and Russian<sup>18</sup> should be favored in primary education, with a recommendation that teaching and learning of those foreign languages studied in grade school should be continued throughout secondary education—a statement that Djurić (2016, pp. 209–10) identifies as an implicit attempt to discourage and diminish the presence of French and German in Serbian formal education.<sup>19</sup>

However, and probably as a consequence of this attempt to further strengthen language management in Serbian language education policy, the 1960s also represent a period in which bottom-up FL education policies first emerged, primarily

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<sup>16</sup>A specific sociopolitical context needs to be outlined here that illustrates a direct correlation between state politics and foreign language learning: Russian was the only obligatory foreign language from 1945 to 1948 (which marks the ideological separation of Yugoslavia from the Soviet Union). During that time, German was completely banned from Serbian schools. In 1949, all four of the aforementioned languages became eligible for learning and teaching in Serbian schools.

<sup>17</sup>Упутство за спровођење Правилника о спровођењу наставних планова и програма за стране језике (*Manual for Implementation of the Bylaws for Implementation of Foreign Language Curricula*), Службени гласник НР Србије (*Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia*), 10–11, 1961.

<sup>18</sup>Ignjačević (2006) attributes this increased interest in the study of Russian to technological and aero-cosmotechanical achievements of the Soviet Union during the 1960s.

<sup>19</sup>It should be pointed out that other Yugoslav republics did not follow these strong suggestions of the top-down language planners/language managers.

through the activities of the Serbian Association for Foreign Languages and Literatures. First language leaders stepped into the public spotlight at that time: a representative of the Association, professor in the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Zoran Konstantinović, Ph.D., addressed the Serbian Parliamentary Assembly in 1967. He effectively argued in favor of a reform of FL education (in terms of numbers and choices of compulsory FLs taught in schools), as well the status of FL teachers and the quality of their education, along with lowering the age for introducing FLs as a compulsory subject from the 11–12 age group to the 9–10 age group. Moreover, he stressed the fact that Croatia and Slovenia already taught two FLs in secondary school and that they never applied the governmental measures outlined in the previous paragraph.

This intervention resulted in significant shifts in FL education policy design, albeit not implementation. For example, the recommendation favoring English and Russian was removed, curriculum for Italian as a foreign language was designed for specialized Philological high school, and a center for foreign language teacher training was established in the Faculty of Philology of the University of Belgrade (*Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia*, No.9, February 29, 1968)<sup>20</sup> (see Djurić, 2016, for a detailed discussion). Also, the Association of Cultural Cooperation between Yugoslavia and France (*L'Association de coopération culturelle Yougoslavie-France*) supported the introduction of a pilot program in one elementary school in the capital city of Belgrade in which French was taught from grade 1 (ages 6–7) in intensive courses that covered 10 h of instruction each week. The program was supported by the French government, and even though it was soon labeled elitist by the local and the Yugoslav federal government, it has managed to survive in different forms to the present day. During the 1970s and 1980s, the program was also repeatedly cited as an example of good practice in introducing FL teaching at an early age by the Council of Europe (see Filipović et al., 2007, for further details). Lessons learned from this pilot program will be discussed within the case study of the last period of Serbian FL education policies.

It is noteworthy that proposals to introduce FL instruction before the age of 12 were made even during the 1950s. Melvinger (1957) proposed that a FL be introduced in the third year of primary school. He considered general language instruction to be one of the crucial elements in the overall change in learning objectives, which include the development of the ability to express oneself, orally and in writing. An introduction to the oral method during the first semester of the fifth grade was a consequence of his proposal, which provoked a small avalanche of academic articles stressing the methodological difficulties it brought about. The absence of teacher training for this type of teaching and lack of appropriate teaching materials were among the difficulties. However, Momčilović (1961) published an article based on empirical evidence from the study he carried out in a few primary schools in Belgrade in which FL instruction was successfully introduced in the third grade

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<sup>20</sup> *Службени гласник СР Србије*, бр. 9 од 29. фебруара 1968 (*Official Bulletin of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 9, February 29, 1968).

through the application of the oral method (see Djurić, 2019a, for further discussion). Some authors (e.g., Djurić, 2019b) believed that these and other similar attempts were thwarted due not to a lack of teaching expertise or adequate teaching materials but to the omnipresence of the state language ideology. The state was concerned with the maintenance of a national identity, which it feared might be challenged by the early introduction of foreign languages or, on the other hand, by a phenomenon described by the dominant psychological theories of the time whereby early bilingualism impeded full cognitive and linguistic development in children's L1.

The civil wars and the break-up of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s had severe consequences for all aspects of social and political life in Serbia. However, these political issues did not in any significant way affect the FL education policies in the country. Filipović et al. (2007) noted:

During this period, more than 50% of Serbian schools offered two foreign languages to their students. English was the most commonly taught language, followed by Russian, French and German. At the same time, two foreign languages were compulsory in all high schools (and in some trade schools as well). Italian and Spanish were present only in specialized so-called "philological" high schools, and initiatives were taken to introduce these two languages into the general school system (p. 233).

The year 2000, as already stated, marks not only the beginning of the new millennium but also the introduction of the first democratically elected government in Serbia, which from the onset showed great interest in reshaping general educational policies. Kovač Cerović et al. (2004) indicated that until the beginning of the new millennium, the Serbian educational system was characterized by a high degree of top-down, centralized, management-driven educational policies that were not responsive to the needs of marginalized and other vulnerable groups (such as certain ethnic groups, i.e., minorities, or children with special needs from all strata of the Serbian society). This supports some of our claims made in the previous paragraphs regarding the state-imposed restrictions in the area of foreign language education policy, particularly in terms of language selection and initial age of foreign language instruction.

The rest of the paper will present a critical review of foreign language education policy, early childhood foreign language instruction, and the role of English as a foreign language in the twenty-first century world that explicitly recognizes English as a *global lingua franca*.

## **Serbian Language Education Policy in the Twenty-First Century: Reality vs. Vision and Needs**

Despite all attempts to ensure that all children in Serbia would have access to quality education (proclaimed by the initial educational reform of the first democratically elected government, 2000–2003), diversified and student-centered early FL



instruction remains in the domain of elitist education. Tomanović (2006, 2008) indicates that all longitudinal sociological educational research clearly shows that access to foreign language instruction in Serbia represents an element of social differentiation, a clear marker of membership in traditionally preferred social categories, in which relatively highly educated parents understand foreign language learning as an investment in the future of their children and imbue it with “special significance which is then interpreted as an added educational value” (Tomanović, 2008, p. 434).

In line with the concept of “quality education for all” and following the Council of Europe general language education policy guidelines, the Serbian legislature introduced a General Law on Primary and Secondary Education in 2003, regulating the teaching of the first foreign language in grade 1 or elementary education. At the same time, despite political proclamations about the relevance of FL teaching from the socialist era, this is the first time in Serbian history that learning a FL (and for most politicians it is identified as English) has become a significant and debatable part of the political agenda, a topic of public and academic disputes and examinations, causing controversies and provoking grassroots activism, which directly affects top-down political decision making.

June 2011 marks the graduation of the first generation of students who started learning a FL in grade 1 of elementary school. This is also a turning point in the history of Serbian FL instruction because it was the first time that students had the right and the obligation to choose two out of six foreign languages (English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish) offered by the national curriculum. The first one would begin as soon as they started school, and the second FL would start in grade 5, making these students the first generation of Serbian children who had access to learning two FLs in every school in every region (urban and rural) of Serbia. This was to be the beginning of a new era in Serbian formal education, which was to be geared toward European objectives of plurilingualism defined in the documents of the Council of Europe (e.g., Council of Europe, 2001, 2003).

However, even early on in the implementation of the newly defined FL education policy (2000–2004<sup>21</sup>), the concept of early FL instruction in formal education became a topic of heated controversies, often with a quasi-academic preface added to the debates. For example, in 2004, the newly elected Serbian government (upon the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić in March of 2003), decided to exclude compulsory FL teaching from grade 1. Some applied linguists (e.g., Dimitrijević, 2004) argued that no previous empirical data were gathered and no feasibility studies were conducted that would have supported early childhood FL teaching in terms of teacher qualifications and expertise, especially when it comes to teaching English, which right away became the dominant FL taught to over 95% of first graders of the 2003 generation. Moreover, Dimitrijević (2004) questions the

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<sup>21</sup> The year 2000 marks the start of the first truly democratic changes in Serbia, after 10 years of the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milošević, and the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. The field of formal education was among the first to sustain changes in public policies and teaching practices.

value of this type of exposure to a FL (again, with an emphasis on English) at an age that he defines as being suitable for acquisition of pronunciation only. Thus, early FL learning, in his opinion, can be successfully carried out by native speakers only. Other authors (Lončarević & Subotić, 2004), in a case study on FL teaching in the town of Sombor in northern Serbia, also point to the lack of competent teachers (of English as the only language taught to the 2003/2004 generation of first graders) as well as the lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities (large groups of students). There are also unrealistic expectations about students' individual potential and achievement, while at the same time there is a need to introduce two foreign languages into compulsory formal education in light of the "geographical position of our country and our attempts to join modern and united Europe of the 21st century" (Lončarević & Subotić, 2004, p. 88). Žiropadja (2007) suggests that FL education policies should not be based on parents' wishes and poorly thought-out needs, and that FL learning does not correlate with a critical period (often mentioned in applied linguistics literature). He further claims that FL learning can happen just as successfully whenever it begins if it is supported by motivation and positive peer pressure. This is especially true in the case of English, which is in his view available in different extracurricular communicative contexts (media and new technologies in particular).

Filipović et al. (2006), on the other hand, highlight the relevance of stereotypes and overall educational ideologies that contribute to the general public's negative attitudes toward early foreign language instruction. Often the attitudes are unfounded in the relevant academic literature but stem from strategic and epistemological points of view of individual authors in positions of scientific power. Moreover, Filipović et al. argue in favor of true plurilingualism, which would allow for the development and affirmation of localized, grassroots FL education policies in which students, their parents, local communities, and school authorities would be allowed to specify their personal and collective communicative and intercultural needs and support learning of languages other than English in grade 1. Finally, Vučo (2007) stresses that early FL learning contributes to the development of tolerant, open, and creative individuals, ready to embrace new and unknown elements of other people's cultures, along with raising consciousness about their own L1 position and relevance (especially in light of the fact that Serbian can only be understood as a small area language, i.e., a standard language with a relatively small number of native speakers in comparison to the so-called "world languages", such as English or Spanish) (Filipović & Vučo, 2013; Filipović, 2015c). Last but not least, Vučo's (2007) argumentation clearly illustrates that early childhood education *is* a question of social equality and, thus, cannot be analyzed outside of a concrete sociopolitical context. Access to FL instruction cannot remain the privilege of the elites, who can financially support this educational goal outside of the formal (and free for all) educational system. According to Vučo (2007), this language education policy "respects the principle that a state should provide all with an access to early childhood foreign language instruction, regardless of their social status or geographical position" (p. 285). The compulsory presence of a first FL from the first day of elementary education was reintroduced by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia

in 2005, and it was decided that the instruction of a second FL would begin in grade 5.

At the end of this part of our discussion, we would like to point out once again the relevance of extralinguistic (mainly political and strategic) factors in the formation of all language education policies in general and on early childhood FL instruction in particular. That is, when during the 2000–2003 overall educational reform, political will and power concurred with educational experts' opinions within the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, all problems (e.g., number and competence of teaching staff, adequate teaching materials, pre- and in-service teacher training) were solved practically overnight.<sup>22</sup> All the foregoing and many other issues (primarily those concerning a perceived threat to national identity construction and a declared need to first fully develop the competence in standard Serbian among young students) resurfaced in late 2003 and 2004, when, upon the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić, a more conservative government was elected.

Now, in 2020, a number of uncertainties and criticisms still need to be addressed when analyzing the reality of FL instruction in Serbia. First and foremost, extremely traditional teaching methods and techniques still dominate in classrooms, in compliance with a very conservative understanding of linguistic competence equated with the decontextualized knowledge of grammatical rules, where communicative competence is understood as “teaching ignorance” (Maurer, 2011, p. 145). Serbia still has not reached a point in which an argument could be constructed in public debates geared toward an individualized approach to diversified communicative and intercultural competences in more than one FL, in an educational context that favors additive plurilingualism and that allows each and every person “to use different languages at different levels of communicative competence in everyday speech practices throughout their entire lives” (Filipović, 2018, p. 97). It also needs to be pointed out that in Serbian educational policies, this particular language and teaching ideology has not yet been introduced in a proper way. This is primarily due to a lack of a systematic bottom-up language education policy operationalized at a school and local community level. In overall terms, with rare examples of good practice, teachers are not informed and trained to become leaders who create their own communities of practice and interest; they are not familiar with principles of critical pedagogy and social engagement and responsibility for their own profession (see Filipović, 2015a, for a detailed discussion). These issues hinder teachers' readiness to understand the notion of empowerment and awareness raising about their own agentive role in FL policy design, development, implementation, and change.

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<sup>22</sup> Even then, the acceptance of the reformist proposals was not always welcome on a local level, namely, most schools ignored the ministry's strong recommendation to introduce more than just one FL (English) into the first grade of primary education, thus resulting in an overarching presence of English (98% of all first graders) across Serbian schools, in confirmation of the socio-cultural importance of English as a *global* lingua franca in a large number of local and regional examples of relatively ad hoc, not well-informed, bottom-up language education policy and planning.

It is noteworthy that this particular point is not a *differentia specifica* of the Serbian educational system. Throughout Europe, the relationship between language education policy and teacher education has not yet received attention it deserves (Filipović, 2015a, p. 99). Luckily, we can also report that this situation has started to change in the last couple of years. This is so despite the still dominant managerial role of the institutions of the state that are still very actively (albeit for the most part implicitly) operational in all aspects of FL education policy design and development.

From 2000 onward, the top-down activities of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia (with its corresponding instruments within the government, the parliament, and the media) have been the crucial factor in all changes for better and for worse. The last example, from 2 years ago, helps us understand the fragility (and, at the same time, the strength and importance) of all expertise-driven, bottom-up approaches to language education policy in the face of official state policies. In particular, when in 2007 the second FL was included in the list of compulsory subjects in primary education, it was mainly upon the insistence of agents from academia that the relevance and role of plurilingualism in Serbia was recognized. In 2017, the Ministry of Education and the Serbian Parliamentary Assembly voted on a new General Law on Primary and Secondary Education<sup>23</sup> that converts the second FL into an optional program (as opposed to a curriculum), which was planned to be evaluated only descriptively without grades that would count toward students' GPAs. The argument of the government and the Ministry of Education was that a new subject, information technologies, is needed in Serbian schools if the population is to be prepared for new professional and academic challenges of living and working in the twenty-first century.

This particular set-up would not only have reduced the interest in and motivation for learning a second FL but also definitively positioned English as the only relevant FL studied in Serbian schools, implying that the de facto policy of teaching English as the first FL in over 90% of Serbian schools (see Djuka, 2015 for a detailed account) would have been further institutionalized by marginalizing the instruction of other FLs. This flies in the face of all the proclamations of the Council of Europe, which since the early 2000s has been warning about the danger of de jure plurilingualism without applying political will and economic power to eliminate or at least reduce the impact of prejudices that place an absolute value on the importance of English as a global FL (e.g., Council of Europe, 2003; Beacco & Byram, 2007). A serious confrontation between educational authorities and educational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (primarily the Serbian Association for Foreign Languages and Literatures) ensued, with public debates, professional gatherings, and media coverage. The outcome is very encouraging: the nongovernmental sector managed to make its voice heard, and in February of 2019, the Bylaws to the 2017 General Law on Primary and Secondary Education were approved by the Serbian

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<sup>23</sup> *Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja*

[https://www.paragraf.rs/propsi\\_download/zakon\\_o\\_osnovama\\_sistema\\_obrazovanja\\_i\\_vaspitanja.pdf](https://www.paragraf.rs/propsi_download/zakon_o_osnovama_sistema_obrazovanja_i_vaspitanja.pdf)

Parliamentary Assembly, which reintroduced other FLs as regular, compulsory subjects in all schools in Serbia.

## Conclusions

Language education policies always “interact with contested and contesting ideologies” (Tollefson, 2002, p. 2), which affect “the status and the position of different foreign languages within the society at large on diachronic and synchronic axes” (Filipović, 2015a, p. 100). Like all language policy and planning, FL education policies are never defined by academic criteria exclusively, but rather by a complex and variable set of political, social, economic, and other ideologies of the language planners/language managers (since language education policy is in most cases carried out through a top-down, management-based activity coordinated by the institutions of the state).

Herein, an attempt is made to provide a critical analysis of Serbian FL education policies on both diachronic and synchronic axes, with an emphasis on early or initial language instruction. Our analysis contrasts the overpowering macrolevel policy and planning with a number of successful attempts at the creation and implementation of diversified microlevel policies. The analysis demonstrates the importance and relevance of an intrinsic interplay between historical circumstances, general ideologies, language, and overall educational ideologies, which are all related to specific political backgrounds at different points on a time scale starting in the mid-nineteenth century and ending in 2018. Particular examples of good practice are contrasted with politically driven decisions that often contradict overt statements. The good practices are also contrasted with proclamations of policymakers/language managers relating to the positioning of Serbia in larger European and global contexts, e.g., with the often cited Serbian objective to become a full member of the EU (which is directly related to competences in more than just English as a FL in all communicative language domains).

Moreover, these politically driven decisions stand in direct contradiction with applied linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psychological academic findings that confirm the need to introduce FL instruction at the earliest possible age in order to open up young minds to the concepts of multilingualism and multiculturalism. Djurić (2016, p. 491) calls this the “*black box* of the state,” which more often than not creates macro policies based on nontransparent intentions, plans, and strategies, creating and justifying hierarchies among FLs (English above all others). Consequently, so far in Serbia, macrolevel managerial language education policy design has denied teachers the right to access the decision-making process and left them without the necessary administrative and professional competence, expertise, and awareness of the need for individual empowerment and self-organization. What we need to continue working on is preservice and in-service FL teacher training that would support them in creating alternative, microlevel, bottom-up educational contexts that satisfy their students’, students’ parents’, local and regional communities’, and their own

educational and communicative needs. Moreover, the continuous leadership activity of professional communities of practice (such as the Serbian Association for Foreign Languages and Literatures) needs to be encouraged, which should interact with language teachers on the one hand and language planners on the other hand. This is necessary to assure that all relevant voices are heard in the process of future FL policy design, development, and implementation.

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# Chapter 4

## Early Mandarin Chinese Learning and Language-in-Education Policy and Planning in Oceania



Grace Yue Qi

**Abstract** The earliest history of Chinese communities in Oceania can be traced back to Australia in the mid-1800s. Recent years has seen rapid growth in the number of Mandarin Chinese speakers as a consequence of the patterns of migration to the Oceania region, particularly Australia and New Zealand. Mandarin Chinese (hereafter Mandarin) has gradually become integrated into formal and informal education in both countries. The governments of Australia and New Zealand consider Mandarin a significant language for their youth because of the economic and cultural ties with the Chinese-speaking world. Employing Kaplan and Baldauf's (Language-in-education policy and planning. In Hinkel E (ed) Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp 1013–1034, 2005) framework in language-in-education planning, this chapter summarises both countries' national education systems and examines the importance of Mandarin in the curricula in Australia and New Zealand. It is apparent that community-level policy has somehow reinforced the introduction of Mandarin in complementary and mainstream education. To promote early Mandarin learning, key educational stakeholders or actors have been involved, and each plays a key role, particularly in mesolevel planning. This chapter concludes with considerations for sustaining policy development for all language learners. It is argued that early language learning should foster intercultural understanding and awareness in order to maintain a long-term interest in learning and develop multilingual repertoires in both countries.

**Keywords** Mandarin Chinese · Language-in-education policy · Australia · New Zealand · Early language learning

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## **Introduction: Language Diversity of Australia and New Zealand**

The linguistic landscape of Australia and New Zealand is characterised by widespread multilingualism due to colonialism and mass immigration. In reality, however, both societies are largely monolingual in English (Liddicoat, 2017; Starks, Harlow, & Bell, 2005). English is the primary language across all sectors in both nations. The linguistic diversity and the dominance of English in both societies have shaped educational responses to languages and its language-in-education policies (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017; Starks, 2005).

In Australia, English is perceived as the *de facto* national language and *lingua franca* of Australia. It is increasingly perceived, domestically, as a functional tool to integrate minorities in helping achieve literacy development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and, internationally, as a key tool to ensure the delivery and accreditation of tertiary-level internationalisation (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). In recent years, with increased emphasis on immigration, languages other than English, known as community languages, are visibly present in society and have contributed significantly to its linguistic diversity. Since the 1970s, the situation with languages spoken in the home has been included in the Australian census to explore the changing profile of linguistic and cultural diversity across the nation (Liddicoat, 2017). The 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) revealed that over 300 languages were spoken in Australian homes and 21% of Australians spoke a language other than English. After English, the next most common languages spoken at home were Mandarin Chinese (shortened to Mandarin), Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese (ABS, 2017). However, no single community language has been dominant in the curriculum in Australia. Other Australian languages, such as indigenous languages in Australia, were commonly spoken before colonisation; however, due to the dominance of English in the curriculum and limited provision of support from state and federal governments, hundreds of those have failed to thrive (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). Recent promotion of indigenous languages in Australia and #BlackLivesMatter movements might be helpful in raising public awareness of the importance of Australian languages and actions for the promotion of those languages in policy at different levels.

In New Zealand, English has never been claimed as an official language apart from its dominant role in the government, media and education sectors. In the 1987 Māori Language Act, it was declared that *te reo Māori* was an official language of New Zealand, under the Treaty of Waitangi (Starks, 2005). The language has also gained legally privileged status since then. However, due to urban migration and a new wave of immigration where a certain degree of relevance to the changing demography in New Zealand in recent decades, there has been a decline of Māori language use, while English became the language of economic benefit along with other international languages (de Bres, 2015). In the 2013 census, the six most common languages in New Zealand were English, *te reo Māori*, Samoan, Hindi, Northern Chinese (including Mandarin) and Cantonese. Northern Chinese

(including Mandarin) saw one of the biggest increases in speakers for daily conversation – compared to the 2006 census, the number had almost doubled (52,263 people in 2013) (StatsNZ, 2013). The census outcome reflects the superdiversity (Harvey, 2013) of New Zealand, which represents a transformative ‘diversification of diversity’ (Vertovec, 2007). This implies that people of different national origins may also differ in terms of migration histories, educational backgrounds, legal statuses, socioeconomic backgrounds and languages. Geographically, Auckland is the most diverse or superdiverse city, where 39.1% of the population reported in the 2013 census were born overseas (StatsNZ, 2013). However, such superdiversity is quite a ‘slim’ diversity for many of the birthplaces, ethnic groups and languages (Bedford & Didham, 2015).

It is not surprising that both Australia and New Zealand have similar linguistic profiles in terms of diversity of languages used and spoken in the community, although English has its own dominant position without any need to claim prevalence across all sectors of society. In the past decade, mass immigration in both countries has concentrated in Asian ethnicities, especially those from Chinese-speaking cultures, which has resulted in the emergence of a special role for Mandarin (Chinese) among community languages. Therefore, this chapter focuses on early language-in-education policy development of Mandarin in Australia and New Zealand, particularly early Mandarin learning, informed by Kaplan and Baldauf’s (2005) language-in-education planning framework. To provide a context for the arguments and discussions in both countries, theoretical underpinnings, including the language-in-education framework and early language acquisition theories, will be discussed in detail.

## Language-in-Education Planning Framework

Language-in-education planning, equivalent to language education planning or acquisition planning (Cooper, 1989), focuses on language users and their language learning goals through the educational system. Individuals can develop their own language learning programmes through informal education or intrinsic motivation of learning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005). Language planning involves planned and/or deliberate attempts to change the use or study of a language by individuals and society (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). That is, planning can take place without being aligned with any policy or without any policy eventuating, or policy can be formulated with little or no planning proceeding or following this activity (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, pp. 297–299). Language policy, according to Baldauf (2005),

may be realized in very formal or overt ways, through language planning documents and pronouncements (for example, constitutions, legislations, policy statements), which may have symbolic or substantive intent. Alternatively, policy may be inferred from more informal statements of intent (i.e. in the discourse of language, politics and society), or policy may be left unstated or covert. (p. 958)

The primary goal of language-in-education planning is to construct criteria or guidelines in order to help determine languages taught to meet societal, institutional, individual and community needs (Kaplan et al., 2011). From the curriculum policy perspective, Cooper (1989) indicated that promoting second or foreign languages was usually completed by the language policy planners for the school system. It was more likely to be successful when schools adopted a second or foreign language as the medium of instruction. Otherwise, it was likely to become too difficult to accomplish the language acquisition for use outside the classroom.

Although curriculum policy is well intentioned, the planning process often lacks a proper consultation with language specialists and teachers (Cooper, 1989). Curriculum policy is often constrained by time and instruction of offerings, budget, frequency of educational shifts and political preferences. Consequently, there is little opportunity left for a consultative community policy development. Schools might consult communities about the most appropriate languages they believe should be taught (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003, 2005).

Language-in-education planning is most visible in and closely associated with goals for language and literacy learning in formal educational settings (Ingram, 1990); however, it also implicates the less systematic teaching of heritage or community languages (Hornberger, 2006) and activities related to literature and cultural learning, religion, communicative media and work-related goals. The problem for policymakers is to define and facilitate choices that are relevant to personal interests and needs that aim to encourage active participation while ensuring that the general education benefits and societal needs are met when defining the political climate (Baldauf, 2005; Cooper, 1989; Slaughter, 2017). This largely relies on policy decisions related to teachers, programmes of study and resources and materials that are made available. As suggested by Baldauf (2005), seven interrelated policy goals can be regarded as influencing the success of language-in-education driven policy development:

- *Access policy*, which focuses on who learns what and when;
- *Personnel policy*, which focuses on where teachers come from to teach and how they are trained to teach;
- *Curriculum policy* seeks to answer the question of the objective of language teaching and learning;
- *Methodology and materials policy* looks into the methodology and materials used to reach certain learning and teaching goals;
- *Resourcing policy* is to question how everything required is paid for;
- *Community policy* specifies the consulting process and particularly the group of people involved in this process; and
- *Evaluation policy* aims to connect assessment and methods and materials employed in the educational process, critique the definition of educational objectives and propose a new definition after each evaluation.

In this chapter, I shall focus on access policy, personnel policy, curriculum policy and community-level engagement of Mandarin language planning and policy implementation in Australia and New Zealand, as this framework elaborates the in-depth



understanding of ideological foundation embedded in the promotion of early Mandarin learning in community and educational contexts. The term ‘early’ is closely related to the ongoing debate over age effects on language acquisition, which has indirectly contributed to language planning in education.

## Theoretical Debates on Early Language Learning

Kaplan et al. (2011) argue that early language learning policy may not be appropriate for all children because not all of them are equally ready to be exposed to a new language in an instructional setting. This is also confirmed by Zein (2017), who argues that deciding on the best time to introduce languages through language-in-education policy is a complex process that requires taking into account linguistic, social, economic and political factors. There is a common perception that early second or foreign language learning results in the best outcome for future generations to strengthen national development and achieve global competitiveness. Such politically driven ideology is evident worldwide – many countries have chosen to introduce English as the priority foreign language in primary schools (Kirkpatrick, 2011; Kirkpatrick & Sussex, 2012; Qi, 2016; Spolsky, 2004). Such early language learning policy, in fact, cannot be introduced or implemented well without strong community support – parents as one of the key stakeholders may even participate in lobbying the government to take some action on behalf of their children, who will be advantaged in the early instruction of languages for future endeavours (Ashton, 2018; Qi, 2016; Zein, 2017). In terms of early language learning, Benson (2008, p. 12) considers three myths:

1. The best way to learn a second language is to use it as a medium of instruction.
2. To learn a second language, you must start as early as possible.
3. The home language gets in the way of learning a second language.

These three myths are grounded in the perception of ‘the earlier the better’ in language learning (Qi, 2016). Ortega (2009) explains that age plays a role in the cross-disciplinary debate over the difference between second language (L2) and first language (L1) acquisition. Penfield and Roberts (1959) and Lenneberg (1967) proposed the idea of a critical age period when the new field of second language acquisition (SLA) was emerging. The hypothesis of a critical period for L1 acquisition, and as a corollary for L2 acquisition, seemed natural in the late 1960s and continues to be considered plausible today. Critical periods have been established for several phenomena in animal behaviour and in the development of human faculties, such as vision and brain studies (Ortega, 2009). ‘Critical period’ and ‘sensitive period’ for L1 acquisition in human are well received although a few studies present evidence on conditional situations where children were subject to tragic circumstances (discussed in Curtiss, 1977; Rymer, 1993; Candland, 1993, cited in Ortega, 2009). However, some studies introduced the notion that exceptionally successful late adult learning of Arabic, Dutch, English, French and German (Ortega, 2009)



was possible, moving the debate surrounding the age factor to another question of merit in the field, which is whether children or adults are better L2 learners. Krashen et al. (1979) concluded in their study that older was better initially, but that younger was better in the long run. This is based on their review of 23 studies of L2 learning in L2 contexts published between 1962 and 1979. However, Oyama (1967) and Patkowski (1980) revealed in their 5-year longitudinal studies that when accomplishments in the L2 were compared after at least 5 years of residence in the L2 environment, young starters were clearly better than adult starters (both cited in Ortega, 2009). Also notable is the fact that young learners compared to adult learners require a longer period of time to develop their first language before they are able to acquire skills to support sustainable learning in an additional language (Dutcher, 1995).

It is even more complex when it comes to the age factor in L2 learning, which considers two threads of evidence in the research community. One is that age effects may be present in the acquisition of additional languages much earlier than previously expected, perhaps by age 4. This is relevant to the L2 morphosyntactic research undertaken by Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003) and also grounded in L2 phonology by Flege et al. (1995). The second is the actual relative frequency of L2 and L1 use at the time of the study, which may be central to the task of gauging age effects. This is an issue of so-called language activation or language dominance in bilingual studies (Birdsong, 2005; Perani & Abutalebi, 2005, cited in Ortega, 2009). Therefore, age is an important factor that helps us understand the human language faculty, and, more substantially, the main findings about age and L2 acquisition have supported an advocacy of accommodating diversity of learners in a more effective way (Ortega, 2009).

With regard to language policy and planning, the age factor in SLA has become an important research-based argument to influence policies, especially language-in-education policy and planning imposed for L1 and L2 and bilingualism support (Cenoz, 2009). Holding this view, in many countries, the advantage of early language learning has helped problematise misguided attempts to mandate state/public schools to begin foreign language instruction in primary schools (e.g. Kang, 2012 for South Korea; Ng, 2016 for Japan; Nguyen, 2011 for Vietnam; Qi, 2016 for China) without first evaluating whether the resources and conditions can appropriately sustain such efforts throughout the entire duration of schooling. This trend is regrettably expanding, especially in places where English is seen as the default foreign language (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Nunan, 2003).

In the following sections, I shall focus on the discussion of early Mandarin language policy and planning using the language-in-education planning framework, focusing on access, curriculum, personnel and community policies. The term 'early' relates to the state/public school educational contexts and community-level engagement. The state-level initiatives of early language programmes and support (e.g. resources and funding) in preschools will also be discussed since both countries have imposed such initiatives over the past decades.

## Mandarin Language-in-Education Planning in Australia

### *Access Policy*

In Australia, Mandarin has been a key community language. The promotion of policies aimed at the learning of Mandarin in educational contexts indicates an instrumentalist orientation – benefit young Australians for global competitiveness in terms of the economy and trade. Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2017) described five phases associated with the ideological underpinnings reflected in a long-term tension of sociolinguistic relations in Australia: (1) comfortably British; (2) assertively Australian; (3) ambitiously multicultural; (4) energetically Asian; and (5) fundamentally economic. Mandarin (Chinese) has been identified as a priority key language, accompanying economic, diplomatic and strategic justifications. It is sometimes an indication of short-term strategic and economically related national interest and at other times invokes wider social and cultural changes in relation to Australia and its domestic multiculturalism (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). At the federal level, five formally adopted policies or policy documents have made major contributions to language education in Australia:

1. Report on Post-Arrival Programs and Services for Migrants (Galbally, 1978)
2. National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco, 1987)
3. Australian Language and Literacy Policy (Dawkins, 1992)
4. National Asian Language and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy (COAG, 1994)
5. Commonwealth Literacy Policy (embodied in various reports, media statements and funding programmes since 1997)

These five policies and reports represent the explicit and implemented language policy frameworks that have been prevalent in language education programmes in the past 35 years since 1980 (Lo Bianco, 2003). With a specific relationship towards Mandarin (Chinese), the National Policy on Languages (NPL) and the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy will be the focus in the following discussion, while the history of Chinese immigrants and Chinese languages in the Australian educational system will also be discussed.

The NPL specifically identified the importance of languages other than English (LOTEs) in two broad categories: (1) the languages used in the Australian community were advocated for language maintenance and bilingual education and (2) nine key languages including Mandarin were proposed for second language teaching in addition to language maintenance or immersion programmes (Smith, 1993). Such status was also identifiable in the White Paper/Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) released in 1991, despite restricting the NPL scope and ambition and directing policy emphasis away from pluralism towards a more ‘foreign’ and less ‘community’ orientation (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). The document contains the following words: ‘the learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved to enhance educational outcomes and communication

within both the Australia and international community' (cited in Djite, 1994, p. 32). Mandarin was recognised as one of the 14 priority languages in the White Paper/ALLP. The NALSAS prioritised Asian languages, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean by the termination of funding in 2002. The associated scheme, the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) (2008–2012), a 2007 Labour election commitment, continued to provide support for Asian languages and studies, focusing on the secondary level in school. This programme accelerated student interest and enrolment in a small number of Asian languages, including Mandarin, but also diverted the focus of community language education away from serving local needs (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2016).

Prior to the 1870s, community languages in language education were not treated equally under colonial governments (Clyne, 1991; Liddicoat, 1996). The first official settlement of Chinese migrants in Australia was recorded in 1827. Around the 1980s, large numbers of Chinese immigrants from mainland China came to Australia, mostly as students who settled in the three eastern states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Many Chinese individuals used a Chinese language at home, for example, Cantonese or Mandarin. Until 1961, Mandarin was first offered in secondary schools in the state of Victoria. This long history of community language, conversely, is short in Australian school education (Djite, 1994). As pointed out by Smith (1993), Mandarin had often been seen as important in the curriculum due to the large Chinese community in Australia. It was quite challenging to attract learners of wider communities to study the language at school. For example, most government school principals preferred Japanese to Mandarin. However, there was still a significant increase in terms of incorporating Mandarin as an additional language in the secondary and primary settings since the introduction of the NPL in 1987 (Orton, 2016a). In 1988, approximately 2300 students learned Mandarin in primary schools, while in 1991 over 12,300 students studied the language. In secondary schools, the number of Mandarin learners increased by 52% from 1988 to 1991. Such an increase was not surprising, as a considerable amount of funding was allocated to schools to provide students with the opportunity to develop Mandarin and literacy skills in Australia, especially in 1990 and in 2008 (Orton, 2016a). However, in more recent years, a concern has arisen over the dearth of school graduates with proficient Mandarin in comparison with other popular languages such as Japanese and French. The explanations given for this were inconclusive, as learner categories, time, policies and funding support had to be taken into consideration.

### *Personnel Policy*

Since the 1970s, the promotion of Asian languages in Australia has been undertaken through government policy, specifically policy commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Orton, 2016b). Mandarin and Japanese have been named priority Asian languages, while Indonesian, Korean and Hindi have been added over time. In the

2012 Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, the acquisition of Mandarin skills was emphasised, not only for international trade but, more importantly, as part of the key twenty-first century skills for future generations of Australians. It is proposed that by 2020 at least 12% of students will be proficient in one of the target languages (including Mandarin, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean) by the time they graduate from high school. Although the number of schools offering Mandarin has increased, there has been only very limited success in achieving NALSAS strategy goals (Orton, 2008).

One of the major reasons for this limited success is *the teacher factor* (Moloney & Xu, 2012; Orton, 2011, 2016b). The Mandarin teacher workforce has aged; many of them are already over 50 years old. Their own language is not always a reflection of today's China or current Chinese-speaking cultures, as their understanding of the language and culture is restricted by the closed society they experienced and narrow knowledge base. Furthermore, their teaching pedagogy is outdated compared to the principles outlined in the Australian Curriculum for Languages, which emphasises an interactive approach to promoting student interest in learning and engaging their understanding of human language and communication through reflective activities. For many students who are extremely interested in learning Mandarin at school, the traditional teaching approach simply does not work. This has resulted in dropouts and complaints, such as Chinese lessons are boring (Prescott & Orton, 2012). As Orton (2016b) stated, 'Most teachers of Chinese in Australia are very unaware of the challenges their language poses to foreign learners and have little idea how to deal with student difficulties' (p. 373). The main weakness, not only for teachers of Mandarin, is that teacher education programmes in Australia provide training of preservice teachers of languages in one course together with little specific instruction on teaching the particular challenges of any one language. Most preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education degree programmes specialising in Chinese are L1 speakers of Chinese. Without proper training in the linguistic structure of the language, they focus on the method of teaching Chinese in the teacher education programme and most of the ongoing professional development and training at the workplace. Those who have been trained in China, who have generally graduated with a qualification in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (TCSOL), usually have a sound knowledge of the Mandarin language itself, but they lack a base of learning principles to support teaching practices, such as classroom management, teacher-student relations and behaviour management, on the basis of the Australian context (Orton, 2011, 2016b; Orton & Scrimgeour, 2019).

### ***Curriculum Policy***

Since the first version of the Australian Curriculum launched in 2011, the number of schools offering Mandarin has increased. However, the actual number of students taking Mandarin has declined across the nation. The diversity of learners has created some difficulties. It has made some classes with learners from a Chinese

background easier to teach, but it has caused a low retention level in classes, with mostly L2 learners (with no background in Chinese) quitting. In New South Wales, in 2015, of the approximately 4000 students taking Chinese in Year 12, 400 were from a non-Chinese background. In Orton's (2016b) report, the dropout rate by the senior secondary level for all learners of Mandarin is around 96%. The situation in Victoria and Queensland is reasonable in terms of statistics. Between 2008 and 2014, enrolments in Chinese in government schools remained strong, with a significant increase in primary schools, particularly in 2013–2014. In Queensland, by 2015, a total of 137 government schools offered Mandarin, with 93 in primary settings and 44 in secondary settings. The number of students enrolled in Chinese studies grew significantly in government schools. Although the Australian Curriculum nominates languages for schools to teach, each state operates differently in accordance with the provision of resources on languages, teachers, community demand and schools. To shed light on this issue, two early language policies are analysed: the Australian Curriculum: Languages and the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA).

The Australian Curriculum: Languages (ACARA, 2015) incorporates three separate pathways of students learning Chinese from Foundation to Year 10.

1. First language learners
2. Background language learner: two separate sequences
  - Background learner Foundation to Year 10 sequence
  - Background learner Years 7–10 (Year 7 entry) sequence
3. Second language learner: two separate sequences
  - Second language learner Foundation to Year 10 sequence
  - Second language learner Years 7–10 (Year 7 entry) sequence

Exemplifying the context of Queensland, the Queensland Government State Schools Division developed curriculum into the classroom (C2C) resources to support Queensland state school teachers in the delivery of the Australian Curriculum: Languages, including Japanese, French, Chinese, German, Italian and Indonesian, are part of this major project in response to the Australian Curriculum: Languages. Interestingly, C2C resources on languages were developed based on the sequence for L2 learners to begin language learning from the Foundation Year. The policy of promoting this learning sequence in Queensland aligned with the 2019–2023 Strategic Plan for Global Schools through Languages aiming to expand the study of languages from preparatory (Foundation) to Year 12 with a focus on Asian languages (State of Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2016). Three foci serve as guidance for achieving global schools through languages:

- languages for every student (including supporting school- and community-based learning),
- teaching for a global world (building a global mindset and training teachers for effective heritage language programmes), and

- international education (enhancing international educational partnerships for innovative and engaging education).

All of these sound very promising; however, significant supporting resources need to be provided to meet early language learning goals. First, in terms of contact hours, a minimum of 350 hours is required to study in a language programme in primary school (Foundation to Year 6) and 350 hours in Years 7–10 (Orton, 2016a). In practice, many primary schools teach Mandarin in a 30-minute period per week, and some only once fortnightly. In addition, due to the shortage of qualified teachers, some schools offer Asian languages inconsistently, for example one term for Mandarin followed by Japanese in the second term, or vice versa. Although Mandarin learners are categorised into three streams as outlined in the Australian Curriculum, many schools have no resources to cater for their needs. Background or first language speakers may have to enrol in the lower level of a Mandarin programme, so they earn high marks on exams, but this does little to develop their proficiency skills and nothing to construct their bilingual and bicultural identities (Orton, 2016a).

In terms of the early language learning initiative, as Moloney (2018) argues, ‘learning languages early is key to making Australia more multilingual’. She discusses an important early language learning programme in Australia – ELLA – which was introduced in 2017 and aimed at creating a fun, play-based interactive language learning programme for preschoolers. The trial programme commenced in 2015, and five languages were selected for the trial – Mandarin, Japanese, Indonesian, French and Arabic (Kaufman et al., 2017). Seven apps (part of the Polyglot app) were designed for each language and were progressively released to 41 preschool trial sites throughout 2015. Four to six activities were made up for each app. In February 2017, Swinburne Babylab (Swinburne University of Technology) submitted a final evaluation report of ELLA apps to the Australian Government (Kaufman et al., 2017), stating that children enjoyed ELLA apps and language learning outcomes have exceeded educators’ expectations. Parents interviewed for the project also confirmed the effectiveness of the ELLA apps and indicated that preschool children learnt and developed an interest in learning a foreign language because of the opportunity to use ELLA apps. The report concluded that ‘after two weeks of use at home, children learnt from the ELLA apps’ (Kaufman et al., 2017, p. 7). However, since the apps were only available for use at participating preschool centres, parents were not able to access the apps and could not provide the necessary scaffolding outside of preschool. Many parents who are not speakers of those target languages were hard-pressed to determine whether the apps were effective for their child’s language learning. Another concern was whether preschool teachers were able to provide scaffolding to young children learning the language on the apps. These issues were not indicated in the report and could not be reported in publications due to copyright and official permission to access ELLA apps. Nevertheless, investment in early language learning is key to achieving sustained language competence (Moloney, 2018), and the ELLA programme adopted the key approach to early language learning – the apps created a playful and

engaging environment for learning. More importantly, the design of the ELLA apps considered the importance of intercultural learning through digital engagement (Kaufman et al., 2017). This is certainly beneficial to Australian young learners for learning a language starting in the early years.

### ***Community Policy***

Australia has imposed a community level policy to fund community language programmes through complementary schooling, usually after-hours classes or on weekends (Liddicoat, 2017). This initiative was launched in 1981 through the ethnic school program, and then renamed to community Languages element in 1992. The program has provided community support to schools operated by ethnic communities, which purposefully promote each community language to all learners, including background L1 and L2 learners. For instance, Queensland's Mandarin community schools usually teach classes on Saturdays for language acquisition and Sundays for learning of culture and artefacts. One of these schools is in the Taiwanese-oriented community, which teaches Mandarin while focusing on learning attitudes and behaviour management inspired by Taoism and Buddhism. These schools also have school holiday classes and activity camps that are welcomed by Chinese communities and beyond in the south-east Queensland region (Eisenchals et al., *in press*). However, as Liddicoat (2017) noted, these community school programmes are usually not properly evaluated by language specialists, nor are consultations with such specialists conducted, so the quality of teaching and resources is questionable. Nevertheless, all learners at any stage are welcome to sign up for these language programmes. Consequently, it becomes very challenging for community schools to differentiate their programme offerings to suit different types of learners.

## **Mandarin Language-in-Education Planning in New Zealand**

### ***Access Policy***

In New Zealand, Mandarin is one of the key international languages (StatsNZ, 2013). This category of 'international languages', being separate from its national bicultural agenda (Bromell, 2008; Ghosh, 2015; May, 2002) highlighting Māori language rights as regulated by the Treaty of Waitangi (Waitangi Tribunal, 1986, as cited by May, 2002), was recommended to emphasise that 'we must become more familiar with the languages and cultures of the dynamic countries of East Asia and the European Community' (Waite, 1992, p. 4). Chinese immigrants among other migrant groups were considered 'visible immigrants', in comparison with traditional fairly homogenous immigrants from the British Isles (Spooney, 2015, p. 53).



In the 1996 census, an increasing number of multilingual speakers in New Zealand were identified in response to the question of whether they could ‘have a conversation about a lot of everyday things’ (Statistics NZ, 1996 cited in East, Chung, & Arkinstall, 2012). The results showed that Mandarin was a widely spoken minority language in New Zealand and was a community language in Auckland in particular, because of mass immigration in the past decade. Some New Zealanders can trace their heritage back to the 1800s when their ancestors came to New Zealand as miners, so Mandarin and Cantonese can also be heritage languages.

The Waite report in 1992 was the first-ever positive message addressing the needs of the country’s diverse language users (East et al., 2012). In the report, Peddie (1993) showed that languages had gained a high profile in the curriculum, but more in terms of economic strategy than the much needed issues that should have been addressed in the languages policy, such as sociocultural and political values of learning languages.

At the school level, cultural and linguistic diversity in New Zealand were reflected in a number of publications and government initiatives that highlighted the importance of inclusiveness for students in pedagogical practices (Centre for Excellence for Research in Inclusive Education, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2007, 2013). Prior to launching the revised New Zealand Curriculum in 2007, an earlier document, the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993), acknowledged the importance of learning languages: ‘all students benefit from learning another language from the earliest practicable age’ (p. 10).

A government document on education for the twenty-first century suggested a clear guideline in supporting education in New Zealand and proposed setting national education aims as the basis of education policy development (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 7). It demonstrated ongoing improvements in learning achievement in subjects, ‘Māori language, and other languages where these languages are offered’ (p. 27). The key objective was to have all students in Years 7–10 learn a language other than the primary language of instruction by the year 2001 (Scott, 2014).

From the 1990s to the early 2000s, quite a few curricular documents were released with the aim of supporting teaching and planning in the language classroom. However, efforts were considered insufficient after a thorough review by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in the UK and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). In their reports, the two international bodies recommended separating learning areas into English/te reo Māori and languages (Harvey, 2013). This was accepted and became evident in the new document *Learning Languages* (Ministry of Education, 2007). Despite the fact that other learning areas were mandated for all students in their first 10 years of schooling, the languages for students in Years 7–10 were optional, and schools were granted the authority to decide what languages they would offer. Mandarin has been one of the five main target languages funded by the Ministry of Education. By 2012, there were 2,849 students learning Mandarin as an additional language in Years 9–13. The Royal Society of New Zealand published the paper ‘Languages in Aotearoa New Zealand’ (Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013), which discussed the need for a

national languages policy in New Zealand. According to Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, the first step in constructing a national languages policy was to conduct a national assessment to identify languages needing support and language issues requiring attention (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018; Harvey, 2013). The key to learning languages was to foster intercultural competence as a way to strengthen New Zealand's global relationships and create a path for younger generations to improve overall educational achievements, in particular in the case of Pasifika students to access their Pasifika languages (Harvey, 2013). However, as Harvey (2013) argued, the absence of a national languages policy has resulted in the ongoing marginalisation of people and considerably limited New Zealand's potential to become a confident multilingual society.

### *Personnel Policy*

The government's commitment to L2 learning was restated as one of the 10 aims to accommodate the needs of education for the twenty-first century in 1994 (Ministry of Education, 1994). However, at the 1994 Conference of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT), the minister stated explicitly that there weren't enough teachers of languages (Spence, 2004). Since then, the funding supporting all students in Years 7–10 continued as a strategic aim of the government; for instance, NZ\$ 4.8 million was allocated to language learning after the 1994 announcement and NZ\$ 1.9 million was confirmed in 1998 (Spence, 2004). To support the introduction of new curriculum statements, teacher professional development programmes were offered in connection with all international languages, for example, Chinese in 1996–1997.

In recent years, the government has given assistance to teachers through the advisory services, recently renamed as Future Learning Solutions (FLS) – Centre for Languages. Seven national language advisors (Chinese, French, German, Spanish and Japanese) are principally sponsored through diplomatic arrangement working with schools and institutions (Spence, 2004). Meetings with the national Chinese advisors were usually arranged by Hanban (headquarters of Confucius institutes) in China, and their role is to facilitate the professional development of teachers of Chinese and progress in language proficiency in New Zealand. They also assist in accommodating Mandarin language assistants/aides (MLAs) to teach in local schools (primary and intermediate schools). The MLA programme is a small part of a free trade agreement between China and New Zealand, whereby China exports Chinese-trained Mandarin teaching aides to New Zealand to promote the Chinese language and culture to meet the demands for learning the language in New Zealand schools. In 2019, an upgraded free trade agreement was concluded providing a doubling of the number of MLAs (from around 150 to approximately 300) (New Zealand Government, 2019). This programme appears to be rendering a very helpful service to New Zealand because the number of qualified teachers of Mandarin in New Zealand, including part-timers, is estimated at only around 150–180

(MacNamara, 2020). However, these MLAs are very different from qualified New Zealand teachers because they are hired and employed, not in New Zealand, but by the Chinese government, specifically the Hanban.

The MLAs programme has certainly raised serious concerns in terms of language-in-education planning. First, the teaching methods and pedagogy, particularly classroom management and teacher-student relation, of those teachers in the programme may not suit the diverse needs of New Zealand students. Second, many schools, especially primary schools, view this programme as an opportunity to promote the goal of attracting students to enrol and meet community needs for Mandarin learning. However, they have been heavily reliant on the MLA programme, which has not had a positive outcome in terms of schools taking ownership of their Chinese language teaching resources and establishing ongoing, sustainable plans for funding the teaching of Chinese language and culture in New Zealand schools (MacNamara, 2020). In addition, MLAs offer a good solution to compensating for the shortage of qualified teachers of Mandarin in New Zealand, but the dynamics of geopolitical relations between China and New Zealand is complex and could change over time. When teachers and teaching materials have all been prepared by a foreign government and delivered directly into classrooms for introducing language and culture, it seems rather naïve for the New Zealand government to use such materials and teachers for their younger generations' education.

### *Curriculum Policy*

In the New Zealand curriculum, the strand referred to as 'Learning Languages' (Ministry of Education, 2007) has been 'a disappointing feature' (Harvey, 2013, p. 7). It states that communication is the most important focus of language, and language and cultural knowledge contribute to effective communication. These foci are aligned with achievement objectives and standards at each level. To avoid restricting student progress since the earlier version of the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1993), an eight-level approach has been adopted (Ministry of Education, 1995). Te reo Māori and Pasifika languages are prioritised in all documents and government funding in New Zealand. According to the Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group (2018), all Year 1 students are expected to learn te reo Māori in schools by 2020. By 2033 all high school graduates will be able to converse in more than one language. However, the state statistics revealed that the total number of students learning additional languages in secondary school started to decrease in 2009 (Asia New Zealand Foundation & New Zealand Association of Language Teachers, 2016; Education Counts, 2017).

Among the total eight strands of learning areas in the curriculum, 'Learning Languages' is not being considered core or compulsory (Ashton, 2018). In addition, language learning has not been supported by a national languages policy (Oranje & Smith, 2017; Royal Society of New Zealand, 2013). The ministry stated that language learning depends on students and their parents to decide on the available

options at school to pursue (Ashton, 2018; Tan, 2015). If language learning is not considered valuable to promote at the school level, this can ultimately result in the exclusion of languages in curriculum policy (East et al., 2012; East & Tolosa, 2014). In the secondary school sector, language learning as a subject has decreased by 18.5% since 2009. This reflects a trend that there is also a decrease in the number of students continuing to use and learn their family heritage languages. However, not surprisingly, policymakers do not see this as an important issue for this bicultural, multicultural nation (East, 2015; East et al., 2012; East & May, 2013; East & Tolosa, 2014).

### *Community Policy*

For the purpose of language and culture maintenance, community-level policy seems more active and is responsible for practical reactions to linguistic diversity. The community policy in New Zealand comprises a provision for community language school programmes and community events aimed at promoting languages to broader communities. In Auckland, over 50% of the people are multilingual speakers, where Mandarin and Cantonese are the top two Asian languages. The Auckland Chinese community strives to offer community language programmes – children and adult learners are invited to learn Mandarin and Cantonese (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018). To connect school and community language learning, Confucius classrooms are involved as school-based hubs for Chinese teaching and learning. Receiving an annual fund, the Confucius Institute provides teaching resources and language assistants to meet the demand for learning about Chinese, particularly within a cluster of schools. Approximately 30 Confucius classrooms operate independently across the country (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018).

The early childhood sector, including education and care centres, kindergartens, NZ playcentres, home-based care and playgroups, provides early language learning for young learners (Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, 2018). Most early childhood centres are either privately owned or owned by a trust or community, and using the government support available to them they have set up early language learning services to meet community needs (Chan & Ritchie, 2019). A recent report (Education Review Office, 2018) revealed that only 37% of early childhood centres intentionally promoted learning through children's home language or cultural lenses (Cunningham & King, 2018). In other words, the remaining centres may provide an English-medium setting only, and this would leave no opportunity for children to use their community language for communication and learning. In Auckland, this situation was only slightly better, with 58% of centres intentionally promoting learning by using children's home language or cultural lens (Education Review Office, 2018).

## Common Threads on Early Mandarin Learning in Australia and New Zealand

In reviewing and analysing language-in-education policies in Australia and New Zealand, access policy, personnel policy, curriculum policy and community policy, I shall present some of the common findings in both countries:

1. No clear guidance for early language planning: In response to linguistic diversity and societal needs, early Mandarin language learning policies have become the key struggling area. There are no clear guidelines available in official policy documents.
2. Curriculum as policy: Although Australia has been grounded by far more complex language-in-education planning, its constantly updated Australian curriculum is really the one to refer to in understanding policy implementation and strategies. On the other hand, New Zealand's curriculum is the only official policy recognising language learning.
3. Instrumentalist orientation becomes an ideology embedded in language policy and planning: The functionality of Mandarin has been promoted to feed economic and trading objectives with China in both Australia and New Zealand. This significantly undervalues Chinese community-level engagement and efforts towards language and cultural maintenance. It also undermines the rebuilding of family ties and emotional communication, as well as identity development (Cunningham & King, 2018).
4. Diversity of learners needs to be accommodated with appropriate strategies and approaches: Orton and Scrimgeour (2019) highlighted the importance of addressing diversity in teaching Mandarin in school. While the Australian Curriculum recognises diverse learners of Chinese, a careful consideration of methods, pedagogy and planning has not been reiterated. New Zealand does not even acknowledge this issue in its curriculum, leaving it up to teachers to deal with it in the classroom (Ker, Adams, & Skyrme, 2013).
5. Support and professional development for teachers of Mandarin: Some teachers are struggling to provide effective instruction to accommodate the diversity of learners; some lack a lived experience in today's China and its embedded language, while others who are trained overseas are frustrated dealing with class culture and adapting to new school systems (Scrimgeour, 2010). These concerns should be addressed in planning, along with targeted ongoing professional training.
6. Monolingual and monocultural ideology is manifested in the educational goals of both countries. To counter this ideology and to reflect the current social, cultural and political context and fluidity of global interactions, national curricula need to be framed from a plurilingual and pluricultural perspective. Curricula should recognise intra-culturality, interculturality and building connections of language and literacy for developing multilingual and multiliterate identities (Scarino, 2010, 2019).

## Concluding Remarks

Language is not solely a means of communication. It is an extremely important cultural feature representing a community (Kaplan et al., 2011). Therefore, national policymakers need to consider how multilingualism is perceived in multicultural societies. Whether a language represents a threat or a resource, a national language policy is urgently required to reflect understanding of multilingualism and societal multicultural identities.

Although education in Australia is state-oriented, there is still room for improving communication between policymakers and communities. At the same time, other key stakeholders, such as parents, teachers and students, are rarely consulted or engaged in the process of policymaking. Recent studies have shown that equity and access are key to understanding the decline of language uptake in Australian secondary schools (e.g. Cruickshank et al., 2020). These are correlated with language policy and planning at different levels. Ultimately, students make the choice about whether or not to study languages. The attitudes of parents and communities also contribute to and have an impact on decisions made to young learners.

New Zealand has an increasingly complex linguistic environment, which is characterised by rapid language shifts and a monolingual mindset in treating language learning (Ker et al., 2013). Unfortunately, language policy is poorly coordinated in terms of community language maintenance, revitalisation of te reo Māori or meeting the needs of other languages in language-in-education policy and curriculum development. New Zealand researchers and international scholars, such as Professors Kaplan, Lo Bianco and Scarino, have addressed their concerns about sustaining multilingualism in this linguistically and culturally diverse society. Learning languages as part of the New Zealand curriculum is simply not implemented as expected at the school level. It will become a huge concern at the community level if schools do not promote languages in line with the policy. Of the many community languages, Mandarin is one of the fastest-growing. It receives domestic and overseas funding support in connection with helping migration and rendering socioeconomic benefits. It is hoped that this chapter provides an example of assessing and analysing policies and evaluating principles for future development and research employing the Language-in-Education framework. This analysis suggests that New Zealand must raise its existing multicultural profile and foster intercultural competence through language learning. This should be immediately reflected in early childhood, school and community education by providing more targeted and capabilities-based pre- and in-service professional teacher training and development to achieve more consistency of delivery across schools. It is also essential to improve support for mainstream students to appreciate the opportunity of learning an additional language (Ker et al., 2013).

For both nations, at the community level, after-school or weekend language classes for children play a crucial role in maintaining community languages and developing multilingual repertoires. Community education also represents an avenue for lifelong learning for adults who are interested in learning an additional

language or advancing their own heritage language. Furthermore, researchers and practitioners should continue working collaboratively to evaluate what is being done and how it could be improved. Bringing practical insights into theory to construct robust research is another win-win situation for improving our understanding of changing profiles of multicultural societies. It would also be useful for addressing the urgent needs faced by younger generations, so that policymakers can take actions from a humanitarian perspective and set conditions for bottom-up success.

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**Part II**  
**Redesigning Curriculum and Enhancing**  
**Instruction**

## Chapter 5

# Intercultural Understanding in Early Spanish Language Learning: A Policy Perspective from Queensland, Australia



Adriana Raquel Díaz

**Abstract** This chapter examines newly developed National Australian Curriculum (AC) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and their focus on ‘intercultural understanding’ (IU) as one of the key capabilities designed to develop young learners’ capacity to face the challenges of an increasingly multicultural and multilingual society. Drawing on a critical review of the extant literature, recent studies, and government and policy reports, as well as available guidelines and resources developed by local government authorities, this chapter examines policy and practice tensions, in particular the pervasive, enduring focus on English monolingualism as normalised social practice. Against the national educational landscape, it shines a spotlight on the state of Queensland, a largely under-researched educational context with respect to Spanish, a pluricentric, global language with a relatively short history in Australia but which, according to the latest census figures, is the fourth language other than English (after Mandarin, Vietnamese and Cantonese) to be spoken in Queensland homes (ABS, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census Data, <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/2016%20Stories%20from%20the%202016%20Census>, 2016). After exploring the historical and socioeconomic status of Spanish in the larger ecology of languages in Australia, and Queensland in particular, the chapter identifies key lines of convergence among relevant areas of the newly developed AC, the EYLF and emerging pedagogical trends in the teaching of Spanish. A case is made for the urgent need to conduct systematic research into the implementation of (Spanish) language learning curricula aimed at developing children’s IU in the early years of education. The chapter concludes with specific recommendations in relation to curriculum and personnel policy goals as per Kaplan and Baldauf’s language-in-education policy and planning framework (Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning. Routledge, New York, 2005).

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**Keywords** Spanish language · Intercultural understanding · Queensland · Curriculum · Methodology

## Introduction

It is undeniable: within and beyond national, physical and imagined borders, in Australia but also in many parts of the world, the deeply fragmented world in which we live, characterised by pervasive monolingual, monocultural practices as well as heightened racism, marginalisation and a dehumanising fear of the ‘other’, requires us to (re)consider what it means to co-exist and communicate with one another. Against this backdrop, developing young learners’ capacity to face the challenges of an increasingly diverse, multicultural and multilingual society has clearly emerged as an educational imperative. This chapter examines the newly developed National Australian Curriculum (AC), and its focus on intercultural understanding (IU), as one of the key capabilities aimed at addressing this imperative. Examination of the AC in relation to the teaching of languages necessitates exploring Australia’s paradoxical relationship with language education, in particular its pervasive focus on English as normalised social practice, which ultimately perpetuates an English-only habitus (Fielding, 2020).

Using the teaching of Spanish language as a case study and drawing on a critical review of the extant literature, recent studies, government and policy reports, as well as available guidelines and resources developed by local government authorities, this chapter examines policy and practice tensions as well as key lines of convergence among relevant areas of the newly developed AC, its focus on IU and emerging pedagogical trends in the field of Spanish language teaching. Against the national educational landscape, the spotlight is brought to the state of Queensland, a largely under-researched educational context with respect to the study of Spanish, which, according to the latest census figures, is the fourth language other than English (after Mandarin, Vietnamese and Cantonese) and first Romance language to be spoken in Queensland homes. After exploring the historical and socioeconomic status of Spanish in the larger ecology of languages in Australia, and Queensland in particular, a case is made for the urgent need to conduct systematic research into the implementation of (Spanish) language learning curricula aimed at developing children’s IU in the early years of education. The chapter concludes with specific recommendations with respect to curriculum, methodology and personnel policy goals as per Kaplan and Baldauf’s (2005) language-in-education policy and planning framework.



## Australian National Curriculum: Intercultural Understanding at the Heart of Language Education

Preparing young children to develop the dispositions and competences required to interact in the world in which we live in a way that enables them to ‘shine their light and make a positive difference in our world wherever they are’ (Rader, 2018, p. 1) cannot be more urgent. Part of this challenging task consists in confronting our preconceptions and assumptions, and more importantly, it requires us to consider how these preconceptions and assumptions may have been shaped by our own language(s) and culture(s). In this context, therefore, it is important to recognise the importance of nurturing children’s intellectual and emotional development as they prepare to become globally engaged citizens.

These key ideas can be found at the heart of the newly developed AC, which began its development over a decade ago, with the impetus and rationale provided by the 2008 Council of Education Ministers Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008). This declaration, which centres on the development of ‘responsible *global* and local *citizens*’ (p. 9) who are ‘able to *relate to and communicate across cultures*, especially the cultures and countries of Asia’ (p. 9, emphasis added), begins with the following statement:

Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the last decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for special, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship. (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4)

The AC was then conceptualised in several stages that included an ample collaborative approach to its design. The AC was also underpinned by extensive consultation, which, according to Angela Scarino (2019) – one of its invited co-authors and author of the Shape paper for the AC: Languages – was ‘perhaps the most extensive in the history of curriculum development in Australia’ (p. 64). Feedback received from consultations, however, ‘focused inevitably on matters of structure or the surface of the substance of learning, or implementation’ (Scarino, 2019, p. 64), rather than on the conceptualisation of the curriculum as such. According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) website, this consultation included:

- public feedback at key consultation points through the completion of online surveys and provision of written submissions;
- state/territory consultation forums involving teachers, academics, authorities and associations;
- national panel meetings involving a range of experts – teachers, academics, authorities and associations;
- meetings with state and territory authorities and major professional associations;
- participation of intensive engagement schools and teachers in using, and commenting on, the usefulness of the curriculum; and
- critical readers and reviewers around the country.

In terms of its overall structure, the AC, which was endorsed in 2015, comprises a three-dimensional design that includes seven learning areas, with general capabilities and three cross-curriculum priorities ‘embedded’ or ‘integrated’ in some way within the content described for each of the learning areas (see, Scarino, 2019, for a critical analysis of the conceptual underpinnings of the AC). These cross-curriculum priorities aim to give students the tools and language to engage with and better understand their world at a range of levels. The seven general capabilities are identified as ‘essential skills for students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century’ (ACARA, 2011) and comprise literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) capability; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; and IU.



### Three Key Dimensions of the Australian Curriculum (©ACARA, 2010a)

The Shape paper for languages<sup>1</sup> (ACARA, 2011) provides a rationale for language education, a description of key theoretical components and an overview of the curriculum structure and processes. In this Shape paper, explicit acknowledgement and articulation of the importance of an intercultural dimension in language learning is foregrounded and utilised as a leading thread throughout. In this context, IU, included among the seven key capabilities to be developed by learners across all areas of the curriculum, is concerned with guiding learners through a process of

<sup>1</sup> While it is understood that in the United States, the term ‘world languages’ is currently preferred, in Australia, ‘languages’ is the term that has been adopted in the national curriculum. In the past, other terms, such as ‘languages other than English’ (LOTE) and ‘community languages’, have been used and may be found in various policy documents and scholarly publications.

linguistic and cultural decentring, which entails critical engagement with the pre-conceptions, assumptions and orientations that students bring to their learning through their existing language culture(s) and how these may be challenged by the new language experience. As such, IU ‘involves students learning about and engaging with diverse cultures in ways that recognise commonalities and differences, create connections with others and cultivate mutual respect’ (ACARA, 2011). Furthermore:

By learning a new language or learning to use an existing language in new domains and contexts, students are able to notice, compare and reflect on things previously taken for granted; to explore their own linguistic, social and cultural practices as well as those associated with the target language. They begin to see the complexity, variability and sometimes the contradictions involved in using language.

Importantly, IU aims to cultivate values and dispositions such as curiosity, care, empathy, reciprocity, respect and responsibility, open-mindedness and critical awareness, which may guide learners to ‘realise that successful intercultural communication is not only determined by what they do or say, but also by what members of the other language and culture understand from what they say or do’. As such, development of IU is understood to occur along a continuum organised around three interrelated elements or key intercultural dispositions: (1) recognising culture and developing respect for it, (2) interacting and empathising with others and (3) taking responsibility for their own behaviours and their interactions with others within and across cultures. These elements are diagrammatically represented in Fig. 5.1 below. According to ACARA (2014), this capability aims to ‘develop young people who will be active and informed citizens with an appreciation of Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and the ability to relate to and communicate across cultures at local, regional and global levels’, and in so

**Fig. 5.1** Intercultural Understanding (©ACARA, 2010b)



doing, ‘nurture open-minded, critically aware students with the positive ‘intercultural behaviours [for] learning to live together’’ (ACARA, 2014).

Furthermore, given the increasingly diverse sociolinguistic landscape, the Australian Curriculum: Languages (AC: L) recognises the distinctive nature of each of the main languages for which a curriculum was developed, ‘in terms of its structure and use, its community presence in Australia, and its history in Australian education’ (Scarino, 2018, p. 470). The design also distinguishes among learners’ diverse backgrounds and specific needs by outlining three possible language learning pathways. For the majority of languages for which a curriculum was developed – Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese – the Foundation (F) to Year 10 curriculum targets the dominant cohort of learners for that language in the current Australian context, that is, second language learners. The AC design also proposes pathways for those learners who continue to develop the language being learnt as their first language and those who are home users of the language to some extent, referred to as ‘background learners’ or ‘heritage learners’. Pathways have been developed for all three learner groups – second language learners, background language learners and first language learners. The AC therefore encourages teachers to differentiate learning to cater for students of different backgrounds by making appropriate adjustments to the curriculum.

With the recent development of the AC, each of the six states and two territories – which comprise 27 separate education jurisdictions – has begun the process of adapting it to their situated contexts, always ensuring compliance, but, at times, adding aspects to it relevant to their own state, particularly with respect to assessment requirements and processes. As highlighted by Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2017), the AC is yet to be ‘universally enacted and without a national policy directive and funding, the imperative to develop robust language programs is weak’ (p. 457). One of the key stumbling blocks in this context concerns the fact that ‘the benefits of language learning in the primary school years are not well understood by school policymakers and school principals, many of whom in Australia are monolingual’ (Moloney & Xu, 2018, p. 22) and many on whose decisions the implementation of these curriculum guidelines relies.

Overall, the AC: L explicitly recognises that bilingual or plurilingual capability is the norm in most parts of the world. Its effective implementation in the long term will therefore be highly dependent on a shift in the long-standing ‘monolingual mindset’ (Clyne, 2008) that still permeates Australian society (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017; Scarino, 2014) and policies on the development literacy (Schalley et al., 2015) as well as on a whole-school approach to the development of IU (Ohi et al., 2019). In addition, the development of IU needs to be understood as deeply interwoven in the increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse fabric of a society still coming to terms with its colonial history and very much present reality for First Nations peoples.

## IU and Languages in Australian Early Years Education

In Australia, early education spans both the early education and care (ECEC) sector and the early years of primary school. The former includes childcare (from birth to 3–4 years of age) and preschool education while the latter comprises Prep (or Pre-Primary), Year 1 and Year 2, i.e., from 4–5 years of age until 7–8 years of age. This is also described as Foundation – Year 2 or F–2 in the Australian Curriculum (AC), the first of five bands in the F–10 AC sequence. This may also be referred to as junior primary or elementary school in other jurisdictions and countries around the world.

Intercultural understanding principles addressed in the AC are also explicitly addressed in Australia’s first national Early Years Learning Framework (Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations {DEEWR}, 2009). This framework is a guide which consists of principles, practices and five main learning outcomes, along with each of their sub-outcomes, based on identity, community, wellbeing, learning and communicating. Among these three interlinked components, those that relate to IU specifically are as follows: *Principle 4*, which refers to respect for diversity and describes the way in which educators ‘honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families’ (DEEWR, 2009, p. 13); and *Outcome 2*, which highlights that children are connected with and contribute to their world and ‘respond to diversity with respect’ (DEEWR, 2009, p. 26). As such, while the AC incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and engagement with Asian cultures, the EYLF focuses on ‘intercultural and ethical understandings such as children’s knowledge of other cultures, respect for diversity and awareness of fairness’ (Miller & Petriwskyj, 2013, p. 257).

Engagement with linguistic diversity in the EYLF refers mainly to inclusive practices such as supporting home language maintenance – including First Nations languages – whilst learning Standard Australian English. Morgan et al.’s (2016) report on *Effective Practice in Early Years (Prep-Year 2) Language Programs*, commissioned by the Queensland Department of Education and Training, provides a comprehensive review of studies at international – European and US contexts – and national and state levels to support effective language teaching practices in the early years. This review includes a scan of the extant literature available through *Babel*, the journal of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, between 2005 and 2015. This scan revealed that studies tend to focus largely on bilingual/immersion programmes as well as on the intercultural orientation to language teaching. Indeed, in the last 5 years or so since the endorsement of the AC, interest in the embedding and integration of IU in the primary school sector has grown steadily. This is not surprising given the increasingly multicultural classrooms across sectors, but particularly in the early years of education.

A key step taken to embed the study of languages other than English and to encourage language and culture learning over the span of compulsory education has

come under the umbrella of technology with Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA), a digital, play-based programme which includes a series of interactive applications (apps) aimed at making language learning engaging and interesting to young children. This Australian government initiative was initially developed with a focus on early learners, from birth to 5 years and through the transition to school, to support implementation of the EYLF. Currently, ELLA is being trialled in the F-2 band as well. School trials, which will include up to 300 schools across Australia in the 2019, 2020 and 2021 calendar years, will measure the success of ELLA in schools where there are no language programmes in place or where a language programme does exist they will be used as an additional resource. ELLA currently comprises 11 languages: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Spanish and Vietnamese. In 2020, the Australian government committed to also supporting the implementation of the apps in Korean and Turkish, which will fully align the ELLA suite of languages with the languages in the AC (MacDonald, 2019). Despite such a strong commitment to language learning through ELLA, explicit linkages between the study of languages and IU remain elusive. Indeed, ‘when asked whether the ELLA program had influenced the promotion of cultural awareness, most educators reported that the impact had been minimal because multiculturalism was already part of their practices’ (Kaufman et al., 2017, p. 29).

In the primary school sector at large, the most comprehensive study focusing on school-wide approaches to the development of IU can be found in Ohi et al. (2019), who, together with Shaw (2019) and Halse et al. (2015), draw on qualitative data from a large-scale study conducted in schools in the state of Victoria. According to Ohi et al. (2019), ‘a successful [intercultural education] programme is embedded in broader school practices and ethos (evident in the formal and informal curriculum) and in the words, actions and interactions of the principal, teachers and students and reflected throughout the everyday practices of the school’ (p. 243). With regard to IU development through the language area, available studies are not surprisingly starting to emerge in the area of Chinese language (e.g. Moloney & Xu, 2018), the most commonly spoken language in Australian homes after English (ABS, 2016).

Additional research is therefore needed on whole-school approaches that complement the development of IU *through* the languages they offer or that are relevant to the wider community. Overall, more evidence of the articulation of espoused goals in practice is required. As highlighted by Driscoll and Simpson (2015, p. 179) in the UK context:

Through languages, primary schools are increasingly providing whole-school cultural activities and international opportunities. These rich opportunities offer a platform to develop intercultural understanding but there is limited evidence to suggest that schools plan a cohesive cultural programme with clear conceptual goals and strategies even though many primary teachers believe that intercultural learning is at the heart of the language curriculum.

Research in this area will necessitate explicit recognition of the extensive linguistic repertoire increasingly available to children in Australia (both in the classroom and at home as well as in the school community at large) (D’warte, 2019,



2020) and the development of corresponding pedagogical approaches in which every child can excel (see also Rojas-Bustos, 2020, for comparative discussion of early language education in England).

## Language Education in Queensland Context

Two key state policies concerning the provisions of languages were released in the state of Queensland in 2014. First, *Global Schools: Creating Successful Global Citizens*, released at the time as a draft for consultation, comprised two highly ambitious targets to be achieved by 2025, that is, roughly within 10 years of their release. The first target centred on primary school level language studies provision and set out to reach 100% of Queensland state primary schools offering languages from Prep (5 years of age). The second target centred on secondary school level language provision and set out to double the current average percentage of students graduating with a language: from around 7% to 15% of Year 12 studying a language. It is important to note that these targets were subsequently dropped, with the current government endorsed policy solely stating that, *where possible*, schools are to offer a language programme from Prep to Year 12 (DET, 2019). The second policy was the Languages in Queensland state schools policy, which announced the mandatory provision of languages from Years 5 (10 years of age) to 8 (13 years of age). The languages prioritised in these documents are mainly Asian languages, which have raised concerns regarding the way in which the notion of ‘global citizens’ is conceptualised in the policy (Poyatos Matas & Mason, 2015).

Queensland schools were required to implement the AC by the end of 2020. Schools may choose to teach any language for which an ACL syllabus has been written. For the languages area, students are to be taught the curriculum for the year-level band that matches their class cohort/year of schooling (Prep-2; Years 3–4 and Years 5–6). In terms of curriculum policy, The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) “is prevented by legislation from providing differentiated syllabuses based on language proficiency, background or heritage, hence syllabuses are designed for second language learners, who are assumed to have commenced studying the language in the compulsory years” (Kohler, 2017, p. 9).

Language programmes are conceptualised around the topics of the language syllabus (e.g. self, family, school, sports and aspects of the target language country). There are also two potential entry points for the commencement of language studies in state schools: Prep or Year 7, which is now the first year of high school for students in Queensland. The time dedicated to language teaching at this level is stipulated as approximately 50 min a week in state schools, but this may differ in independent (private) schools. While time allocations for all other learning areas are defined by the Department of Education and Training (DET), time allocations for the languages area are stipulated by the QCAA and follow the same times as the AC. The respective times are outlined below in Table 5.1. The actual wording of



**Table 5.1** Time allocations for languages in Queensland state schools

Year level/s		Time allocated (minimum)
Primary School Level	Prep– Year 6	46 hours/year if 37 teaching weeks 50 hours/year if 40 teaching weeks (1.25 hours/week, 85 minutes/week)
Lower Secondary School Level	Year 7–9	74 hours/year if 37 teaching weeks 80 hours/year if 40 teaching weeks (2 hours/week, 120 minutes/week)
	Year 10	70 hours/year if 35 teaching weeks 76 hours/year if 38 teaching weeks (2 hours/week, 120 minutes/week)

current policy documents in the state indicates that state schools are ‘strongly encouraged’ to offer a language programme from Prep (5 years of age) to Year 12. According to the current guidelines (Education Queensland), principals, in consultation with their school community, will make decisions about the choice of language and the year levels of provision.

Overall, the absence of an explicit action plan to implement these ambitious goals as well as the lack of an evaluation strategy to assess implementation and quality outcomes (Mason, 2018; Poyatos Matas & Mason, 2015) means that these series of guidelines and recommendations may not be adequately enforced to secure the equitable and sustainable provision of language education in Queensland.

## From Curriculum to Classroom

While all Australian states have developed their own approach to supporting the implementation of the AC, in the state of Queensland, the State Schools Division developed the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) – recently recast as Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Unit. C2C materials for languages include: band plans – as per the bands of the AC; topic overviews – advice on designing a sequence of teaching and learning; a topic map organised according to topics and key ideas; topic outlines – learning opportunities, teacher and student resources; unit plans; assessment materials; language, literacy and numeracy essentials. These materials contain resources that assist teachers in planning learning experiences for students and assessing these experiences against the achievement standards. Languages belong to Phase 2 of the group of learning areas developed. However, unlike the Phase 1 learning areas, such as science and mathematics, languages do not have individual lesson plans. Rather, learning opportunities within a unit are presented in the form of topics. C2C materials for languages are designed to provide flexibility for schools to make decisions about how the language curriculum will be implemented based on the local context and needs of students in schools. While units and materials available are not mandated for use and may be ‘adopted or

adapted', there is strong encouragement to utilise these resources, particularly in primary schools.

## Spanish-Speaking Community in Australia

After English, the next most common community languages<sup>2</sup> spoken at home are Mandarin and Arabic, with higher concentrations in urban areas. Table 5.2 presents a list of the top 10 languages spoken in Australia ranked by number of speakers and percentage representations nationwide and in greater capital cities.

The situation of Spanish in Australia, a pluricentric language spoken officially in 21 countries around the world, is quite distinctive. Globally, Spanish has been ranked as the second most commonly spoken language as a mother tongue after Chinese and third in terms of the sheer number of speakers after Chinese and English. Indeed, the estimated combined number of Spanish speakers is approaching 500 million worldwide, a figure that includes learners as well as speakers of various levels of language proficiency (Instituto Cervantes, 2019). Yet, as highlighted by Jones Díaz and Walker (2018), 'this global status holds limited currency' (p. 465) in

**Table 5.2** Top 10 languages spoken at home – 2016 census data (ABS)

Language (excludes English)	Number of speakers	%	Greater Capital Cities %
1. Mandarin	596,703	2.5	3.6
2. Arabic	321,720	1.4	2.0
3. Cantonese	280,943	1.2	1.7
4. Vietnamese	277,391	1.2	1.7
5. Italian	271,602	1.2	1.5
6. Greek	237,583	1.0	1.5
7. Filipino/Tagalog	182,498	0.8	1.0
8. Hindi	159,637	0.7	1.0
9. Spanish	140,813	0.6	0.8
10. Punjabi	132,500	0.6	0.8

<sup>2</sup> 'Community language' is the term used in Australia to refer to the minority languages spoken by immigrant communities. In the North American or British contexts, these would typically be referred to as 'heritage languages'.

Australia, where according to the latest census data, it ranks ninth among the top 10 non-English languages spoken at home. Indeed, apart from Italian and Greek, Spanish is the only other European language that has retained its place in this list, and it is considered one of the few European languages to have been consistently growing since the early 1990s (Travis, 2013).

The Spanish-speaking community<sup>3</sup> in Australia is one of considerable diversity, marked by several waves of migration (García, 2002). López (2005) traces back the first wave of Hispanic migrants to the 1840s, when Catalan pioneers and a smaller number of other Spaniards arrived in Australia, ‘attracted by the prospects of wealth in the Australian goldfields, but also ... escaping from the economic, social and political upheavals (p. 104). Later, from the middle of the last century, more or less constant waves of migration from various Spanish-speaking countries can be identified. The 1970s in particular saw the first significant numbers of Latin American immigrants arrive due to the advent of repressive political regimes in the region. From the early 2000s, and due to a succession of global financial crises, economic factors have propelled new waves of migrants from both Spain and Latin America (Jones Díaz & Walker, 2018; Urribarri et al., 2016).

These migration waves are clearly reflected in available census data. In the 15-year period from 1996 to the 2011 census, the number of Spanish speakers increased by almost 30% due to the significant rise in skilled migrants from Spain and the Americas since the turn of the new millennium. Significantly, in the 5-year period between 2011 and the 2016 census, this relative growth is calculated at nearly 25% (ABS, 2016). As a result, diplomatic, trade, cultural and intellectual exchanges between the Australian public and private sector have continued to develop and strengthen over the last few decades, particularly with Latin American countries (Peñaloza & Walsh, 2019; Urribarri et al., 2016).

Currently, the Spanish-speaking diaspora, a mixture of permanent settlers and transient migrants, represents an important presence in Australia. Yet, research on their migration history and societal impact remains limited (Urribarri et al., 2016). Available studies reflect a strong focus on a sense of belonging and intergenerational language maintenance as well as identity construction, particularly among women, children and the youth, with some studies honing in on the experiences of specific national groups and, more recently, on digital and transnational citizenship (e.g. El Salvadorian migrants, Chilean migrants, Mexican migrants) (Clyne & Kipp, 2011; Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004; Jones Díaz, 2003; Jones Díaz & Walker, 2018; Maggio, 2017; Martín, 1996, 2011; Mejía, 2016; Mejía et al., 2018; Rocha & Coronado, 2014; Sanchez-Castro & Gil, 2008; Zevallos, 2005a, b, 2008). Overall, in terms of language maintenance, Jones Díaz and Walker (2018) succinctly observe that ‘while

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<sup>3</sup>Throughout this chapter, the term ‘Spanish-speaking community’ is used as shorthand to foreground the common language spoken by a heterogenous community of speakers. It is acknowledged that this is not a nonproblematic term given the heterolinguistic and cultural diversity within this community as well as the historical tensions underpinning their language maintenance strategies (see López, 2005; Martín, 1996, 2011; Rocha & Coronado, 2014, for critical analyses of this issue).

Australia's language policy has effectively promoted the use of minority languages in the private domain, it has not extended the use of these languages to the public domain' (2018, p. 466), which includes the educational system.

## Early Spanish Language Education in Australia

The first comprehensive study documenting the place of Spanish language across educational sectors in Australia dates back to the mid-1990s (Valverde et al., 1994). This was the last in a series of commissioned reports on 9 Key Languages in Australia and reviewed the status of Spanish in relation to policy and second language teaching with detailed quantitative and qualitative data, including student demographics, education policy, ethnic schools, second language instruction, educational associations, curricula, instructional materials, tests and testing, teacher education and certification. More than 20 years later, however, few studies have looked at the state of Spanish language teaching in Australia, particularly in the compulsory school sector (primary and secondary). Available research centres on early-childhood bilingualism in children from a Latin American-Australian background (Jones Díaz, 2001, 2003, 2014). This suggests that the value and place of Spanish for young learners has been largely framed around issues of language maintenance.

The dearth of research around compulsory education may be attributed to the limited structural support for Spanish in Australia (Jones Díaz & Walker, 2018), which is reflected in terms of funding support schemes and the limited number of Australian schools that offer Spanish as part of their curriculum. As illustrated below in Table 5.3, data provided by the 2015 Australian Schools Snapshot indicate that only 111 Australian primary schools (government and non-government/private)

**Table 5.3** Australian schools snapshot (2015)

STATE	Primary Schools		Total per State
	Public	Private	
1. New South Wales	14	18	32
2. South Australia	21	8	29
3. Queensland	8	10	18
4. Victoria	13	1	14
5. Western Australia	6	7	13
6. Australia Capital Territory	1	2	3
7. Tasmania	0	1	1
8. Northern Territory	1	0	1
Total for Australia	64	47	111

currently offer Spanish language studies. Among the six Australian states, Queensland ranks third, after New South Wales and South Australia, in the number of schools that teach Spanish. This ranking is a reflection of the geographic distribution of Spanish speakers (ABS, 2016) based on their settlement over the successive waves of migration described earlier. According to the latest available data, the number of Spanish language students in public primary education is 18,967. In private education there are 4165 students, which combined reaches a figure of 23,132 students nationwide (Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional, 2018).

According to the latest census figures, Spanish is the fourth language other than English (after Mandarin, Vietnamese and Cantonese) to be spoken in Queensland homes (ABS, 2016). Furthermore, according to the yearly report *El Mundo Estudia Español* [The World Studies Spanish] (2018), there are almost 3000 primary school students of Spanish among the total 18 schools (8 public and 10 private) that offer this language as an option. Overall, despite the limited number of schools offering Spanish, according to *El Mundo Estudia Español* (2018), which is prepared by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEFP), the number of students studying Spanish in primary school has continued to grow steadily nationwide. This report also indicates that while the growth in enrolments is not as notable at the high school level, Queensland is the exception, most likely due to hosting the only Spanish high school immersion programme in Australia (Smala, 2015).

This suggests that despite its established status as a community language, study of Spanish as a foreign language may be on the rise. Ultimately, as Jones Díaz and Walker (2018) highlight, ‘the lack of policy direction has resulted in inadequate provision of Spanish language programs in educational settings, requiring agentive, strategic and politicized efforts by families in the intergenerational transmission of Spanish and identity construction’ (p. 474).

One of the few studies relating IU and Spanish language in Australian primary schools is that by Jones Díaz (2014). This study, however, focuses on programmes targeting learners for whom Spanish is a home or heritage language. Data derived from questionnaires and interviews with practitioners working in early childhood, primary, community language programmes and one community language school revealed the impact of competing and contested institutional, material, discursive and economic conditions on these programmes’ capacity to deliver quality home and community language programmes. Key findings also highlighted that in these educational contexts, the use of English as normalised social practice through curriculum, policy and programme delivery establishes and perpetuates an English-only habitus, which also impacts negatively on the nurturing and maintenance of social and cultural capital derived from the (Spanish) home language. Against this backdrop, therefore, the absence of research on Spanish language-in-education policy in compulsory education programmes, and particularly in the early years, is particularly troubling.

## Mapping Pedagogical Futures Through Converging Lines of Inquiry

One of the developing pedagogical trends currently emerging in the field of Spanish language teaching – driven, in turn, by a global concern with decoloniality (Grosfoguel, 2011; Quijano, 2007) – is the interest in the ideological underpinnings of language education and the colonial legacy that permeates its practice (e.g. Macedo, 2019). These trends converge with the AC’s cross-curriculum priorities related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as well as issues of sustainability (Disbray, 2019). Indeed, the exploration of the colonial legacy experienced in Australia finds parallels in the historical development of Latin American languages and cultures (Heinrichs, 2020), which may, in turn, help engage learners with the enduring effects of coloniality, its resulting power asymmetry in terms of knowledge creation and its resulting racialised conceptualisation of speakers. Such explorations can serve as the springboard for cross-curricular engagement. Engagement with these areas will nevertheless require professional learning opportunities, particularly for in-service teachers (Adam et al., 2019). As highlighted by Miller and Petriwskyj (2013, p. 258) ‘Deeper attention to intercultural approaches is emerging, supported by curriculum trends, yet implementation remains hampered by teacher understanding and a tendency to operate at a surface level rather than engage in socially re-constructive pedagogies.’

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the state of play of the language-in-education policy in Australia with a specific focus on the development of IU in Spanish language programmes for the early years of education. Exploration of these aspects was presented through the lens of key interrelated language-in-education policy goals within Kaplan and Baldauf’s framework (2005): curriculum and methodology. Overall, despite the recognition given to IU and the study of languages in the newly developed AC, the current state of language programme provisions nationwide remains fragmented and fragile, largely due to a weak language policy environment and the loss of collaborative language policy processes across sectors, states and territories (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2017). Moreover, explicit linkages between the study of languages and IU remain elusive.

Research interest in the teaching of Spanish in the early years of education has long focused on issues of intergenerational language maintenance. Discussion of relevant literature and extant studies suggests the need to look beyond the framing of Spanish as a heritage/community language in order to consider how the learning of the language by *all* students may create opportunities for generative dialogues around diversity and, possibly, to integrate emerging decolonial teaching pedagogies,

which may in turn promote engagement with Australia's First Nations peoples, histories and cultures.

This chapter tackled the largely under-researched Queensland context, typically discussed in the literature for having some of the lowest records of success in language learning in the country. This chapter highlighted the leading efforts of the Curriculum to Classroom (C2C) programme and its design of materials for teachers to adapt to their individual contexts. Further research into the specificities of the states' and territories' implementation and enactment of the newly developed national curriculum will be required. This is particularly relevant in terms of the development of IU as interwoven into the study of languages. Additionally, focus on specific languages may also provide complementary evidence that recognises various student pathways. Finally, in terms of personnel policy (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005) and, more specifically, in relation to pre- and in-service, professional learning needs remain a priority. As key agents of educational change, teachers, along with their engagement with the agentive challenges of implementing curricular innovations in their own practice, stand to offer insightful understandings of the current early Spanish language learning landscape in Australia. Indeed, the responsibility of early years and primary school educators for activating and nurturing children's intellectual and emotional development cannot be underestimated.

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# Chapter 6

## Arabic as an Early Language Learning Provision in Bangladesh: Policy Perspectives



M. Obaidul Hamid and Md. Maksud Ali

**Abstract** This chapter provides an overview of the policy and planning of Arabic as an instance of early language learning in the religious stream of education (known as *madrassa*) in Bangladesh. Drawing on historical and ecological perspectives, we first contextualise the policy and practice of Arabic in the madrasa sector. We then utilise a language-in-education policy framework to examine curriculum policy for Arabic based on policy and curriculum documents and media resources. We demonstrate that while the national education policy seeks to harness the benefits of Arabic teaching for meeting spiritual as well as material goals, such goals seem unlikely to materialise on curricular and structural grounds. We observe that Arabic teachers have been entrusted with teaching a crowded curriculum in under-resourced conditions with limited teacher training and professional support. Arabic teaching in the madrasa system is also unlikely to thrive in a hostile social and ideological environment constructed by media, politics and discourse at local, regional and global levels. We conclude the chapter by inviting classroom research on Arabic language teaching and learning as a priority.

**Keywords** Arabic · Early language learning · Madrasa education · Language in education policy · Bangladesh

### Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the policy and planning of Arabic as an instance of early language learning in the twenty-first century in the Bangladeshi education system. Arabic is an important part of the local linguistic ecology, which includes Bangla as the national language, English as a second language, and about

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three dozen minority languages spoken by ethnic communities (Hamid & Hasan, 2020; Rahman, 2010). Although Bangladesh is often represented as a monolingual polity with 98% of the population speaking Bangla, Arabic and these other languages may challenge the ideological construction of linguistic homogeneity. The deep-rootedness of Arabic in the ecology can also be understood from its significant impact on Bangla and Bangladeshi culture and society (Dil, 2012).

Arabic was first introduced in the South Asian region by Muslim missionaries and traders from Arabia prior to Muslim rule in the thirteenth century. Thus, it has a longer history than English, which is associated with British colonial rule (1757–1947). Its continued presence in the education system can be explained by the religious identity of the majority people (about 90%), who are Muslims. Officially, Islam is the state religion in Bangladesh. Arabic is treated mainly as a liturgical language and is not widely used in everyday life. However, reflecting the contemporary trend of commodification and vocationalisation of languages under the influence of neoliberal ideologies (Cameron, 2012; Hamid & Rahman, 2019; Spring, 2015), recent policies have emphasised the economic significance of Arabic. Nonetheless, it is largely restricted to the religious stream of schooling called *madrasa* education (see Hossain & Tollefson, 2007). In line with the focus of the present volume, the chapter will discuss the policy and planning of Arabic at the primary level of madrasa education.

Our interest in Arabic as a case of early foreign language education in Bangladesh is motivated by several factors. As an international language, Arabic is a significant member of the group of world languages (see Ammon, 2010). It is the official language in 22 countries of the Arab world. The petroleum-dependent economy of the Arab region has a significant share of the global economy, which is associated with Arabic (Alwaleedi et al., 2019). Arabic has also spread to other parts of the world due to the global dispersion of Muslims. Notably, it has attracted global attention as a result of the events of September 11, 2001 (9/11). Although the Arab world itself has introduced more English as an antidote to “extremist” tendencies (Karmani, 2005), the US and other Western countries have prioritised teaching and learning of Arabic and other languages of the region for security reasons (Brecht & Rivers, 2012). Secondly, despite the long-standing presence of Arabic in Bangladeshi education, there has been negligible research on its teaching and learning. Arabic is also a neglected field of research in other contexts (Azirah & Leitner, 2016). Finally, Arabic can be located at the bottom of the hierarchy of languages in the country, which is dominated by English and Bangla. The ongoing secularisation of Bangladesh accelerated by the events of 9/11, and the recent regional geopolitics has affected the social reception of Arabic together with the image of Muslims. We have a deep interest in understanding how the acquisition planning of Arabic in this context has been shaped by political and ideological backlashes. Our examination will lead to commenting on Arabic teaching outcomes and the challenges faced by the language in education and society.

While the provision of early language instruction (English in particular) in education curricula has emerged as a global trend, the policy has also attracted much controversy (see Zein, this volume, for a detailed discussion). Apparently, the policy

is informed by the dictum “the earlier the better”, supported by the so-called “critical period hypothesis” in second language acquisition. However, evidence is now building that rules out the singular contribution of the age factor in language learning. Researchers are in agreement that the effectiveness of early language instruction depends on the availability of the language in the natural environment together with a learning-supported environment in the instructional context. Despite this empirical clarity, early language instruction has either continued or even further enhanced across polities. As Zein (this volume) argues, this is due to the prevalence of “the earlier the better” as a widespread and deep-rooted language ideology. Parents and education policymakers alike seem to invoke the ideology at a time when language skills are generally understood as being essential components of human capital (Ali & Hamid, 2021).

As a case of early language provision, Arabic in Bangladesh fits into this language ideology context. The early provision of the language constitutes a recognition of the wider belief about the effectiveness of early instruction. However, this belief is part of an Islamic tradition, unrelated to the critical period hypothesis. In Muslim societies, over the centuries, children have been introduced to the Quran and Arabic at an early age in mosque-based schools. The institutionalisation of Islamic education in Bangladesh through a national curriculum has replicated this tradition.

We utilise Kaplan and Baldauf’s (1997, 2003) framework for implementing language-in-education policy (LEP) for our examination. Also known as acquisition planning, LEP is one of the four types of planning that work interactively to address pertinent aspects of language and society (e.g. status planning about society, corpus planning about language, acquisition planning about learning and prestige planning about people). In pursuing linguistic (e.g. language spread and maintenance and developing additive bilingualism) and political-economic (e.g. business and trade and enhancing global competitiveness) goals, LEP requires policy development in certain key areas, including access, personnel, curriculum, materials and methods, evaluation, resources and community. Table 6.1 elaborates on each of these areas, outlining what kinds of questions may be formulated about the process of LEP implementation. This policy development work is a precondition for launching LEP programmes. A framework comprising these policy areas also provides a lens for investigating existing language programmes. Arabic in madrasa education in Bangladesh has been taught for many years. The framework may assist in understanding how the Arabic language programme has been implemented and, on that basis, what kind of language learning outcomes may have been produced.

The framework has been used by researchers to investigate LEP implementation in a wide range of polities. For example, Ali (2013) and Nguyen (2016) deployed it to research the implementation of English as a medium of instruction in higher education in Malaysia and Vietnam respectively. Li (2008) used this framework to investigate schoolteachers’ roles in enacting English language curriculum policy in China. Hamid (2010) utilised it to examine English for All in the Bangladeshi education system with reference to policy discourse on the one hand and English teachers’ professional skills on the other.

**Table 6.1** Areas of policy development for language in education policy

LEP policy areas	Explanations
Access	<i>Who are the learners and what languages should they learn?</i>
Personnel	<i>Who are the teachers and what training is needed for them?</i>
Resources	<i>Where does the funding come from?</i>
Curriculum and materials	<i>What is included in the curriculum? What materials are used?</i>
Methods	<i>What methods are to be used?</i>
Community	<i>What is the reaction of the relevant community to the policy?</i>
Evaluation	<i>What types of assessment will be used to evaluate students' learning outcomes and the success of the policy?</i>

Adapted by Nguyen (2016), pp. 27–28, based on Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003)

While all components of the framework (Table 6.1) are important for understanding the policy and planning of Arabic in madrasa education, this chapter focuses on curriculum policy. This is a reasonable choice within the scope of the chapter, which also seeks to conduct an in-depth analysis.

Developing a thorough understanding of the policy and policy enactment of Arabic language learning may call for ethnographic research that allows for investigating the multilayered nature of LEP, its trajectory and its various incarnations in different locales (e.g. policy as text in policy documents, as discourse in public media and as practice in classrooms) (Lo Bianco, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). However, in the absence of funding for such research, we draw on policy and curriculum documents, media reports and relevant literature. Our understanding of language and society in Bangladesh and our experience in teaching and researching English also supported us in our endeavour.

## History of Arabic in Bangladesh

The first arrival of Arabic in the region dates back even before the Muslim takeover of Bengal in the early thirteenth century when Arab traders used to come with merchandise to the southern coastal ports, and from there would proceed to Burma, Malay and China. Often their boats carried Islamic preachers who invited local people to Islam. As the locals converted to the spreading religion, they were taught the Quran and the Prophetic traditions written in Arabic. This religious teaching took place in mosque-based Islamic schools known as *maktab* and in monasteries known as *khankah*. This process of Islamic and Arabic teaching was accelerated with the beginning of Muslim rule of India in the thirteenth century. The teaching of Arabic together with religious subjects and practical skills during the next few centuries was formalised with the establishment of Islamic schools known as madrasas. There were as many as 80,000 madrasas in East Bengal in the early eighteenth century (Muslehuddin, 2003).



Arabic was not the official language of Muslim rule in India, so its use was restricted to religious domains. Political administration was conducted in Persian, which was replaced by English by British rulers in 1837. The British had already taken control of India in the previous century, which led to closing down many Islamic educational institutions as a consequence (Abdalla et al., 2004).

As the British took charge of education of the Indians in the early nineteenth century, Calcutta Aliya Madrasa was established in 1870 for Muslim education. This was followed by the establishment of Hughli Madrasa in 1871 and one madrasa in each of the cities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi in 1873. Around the same time, Arabic language and literature was introduced as an optional subject in general schools and colleges across the country (see Muslehuddin, 2003, for details).

As British rule came to an end in 1947, India and Pakistan were created as separate nations on the basis of religion. Calcutta Aliya Madrasa was relocated to Dhaka, as the Muslim-majority East Bengal joined the Islamic Federation of Pakistan. However, the Pakistan government did not show much interest in the promotion of Arabic or madrasa education (Muslehuddin, 2003). Although the Arabic departments in the universities in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong continued teaching Arabic language and literature, the upper secondary level Arabic courses were discontinued in many colleges across East Pakistan.

The independence of East Pakistan (as Bangladesh) from the Federation of Pakistan de-emphasised Islam in pursuing secularism as one of the four state principles (Abdalla et al., 2004). Nonetheless, Islam and Islamic education received policy attention. In 1975, the government established Islamic Foundation Bangladesh. The aim of this national institution was to conduct research on various aspects of Islam, including Arabic language and literature, and publish books and journals. Islamic education also received more policy attention following the political transition in 1975 that replaced secularism by the principle of Islamic faith (i.e. Belief in Almighty Allah). In 1988, the then military ruler introduced Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh. Although the current secular government (in power since early 2009) has reinstated secularism as one of the state principles, Islam also remains the state religion.

## Arabic and the Local Linguistic Ecology

The concept of linguistic ecology (Kaplan & Bladauf, 1997; Muhlhausler, 1996) sheds light on the language situation in a given polity. The ecology metaphor suggests interdependence of all the languages which constitute a linguistic ecosystem. How a particular language relates to the whole system and what kind of relationship it develops with other languages are critical questions for LEP and its outcomes.

Despite the long-standing presence of Arabic in the local linguistic ecology, sociopolitical and linguistic ideologies have forced the language to a marginal status (Abdalla et al., 2004). Bangla-centric linguistic nationalism has dominated language questions in the country since its independence in 1971. This nationalism

emerged during the early days of Pakistani rule, when Urdu was proposed as the sole state language of the new federation. Urdu was seen as a relatively neutral choice because it was not one of the dominant languages in any of the five provinces of Pakistan. In line with the prevailing nationalist views in the newly emerging post-colonial societies, a common language was seen as an imperative for uniting the linguistically and culturally diverse and geographically scattered nation. Although Urdu was considered only at the federal level, which did not aim to replace Bangla at the provincial level, Bangla-speaking East Pakistanis interpreted the language proposal as a West Pakistani conspiracy against their mother tongue. A strong opposition to the Urdu-only proposal led to a national language movement which sought to establish Bangla as a state language alongside Urdu. This was achieved in 1952 through the sacrifice of several Bangla-speaking people, who were killed when the police opened fire on a procession around the Dhaka University campus. The ensuing nationalism privileging Bangla served as a key inspiration for the separation of East Pakistan from the federation and the formation of Bangla-speaking Bangladesh (Hamid & Rahman, 2019; Musa, 1996).

Language policy reforms in the early days of the new nation were seen through the prism of linguistic nationalism, which showed limited tolerance for languages other than Bangla. Although the installation of Bangla as the national/official language was not a surprise, the denial of the languages of ethnic minority communities turned the linguistically oppressed nation (during Pakistani rule) into a linguistic oppressor (in independent Bangladesh). National policies for other foreign languages reflected mixed attitudes. English was not completely repudiated, but it was demoted to a foreign language and lost many domains to Bangla. Urdu as an “enemy language” did not deserve policy attention. Arabic also did not have a favourable reception. This may be because, first, Arabic had been proposed as an alternative to Urdu as a state language for Pakistan and, second, allegations had been made that Pakistani rulers considered changing the Devanagari script of Bangla into Arabic during Pakistani rule (Ahsan, 2012).

The early nationalist views of language were modified in the following decades as the nationalist euphoria calmed down. English was installed as a compulsory subject for Years 1–12 in recognition of its significance in a globalised world (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hamid & Rahman, 2019). Although it took time, languages of the minority communities were also officially recognised (Ministry of Education, 2010). Attempts have been made to introduce multilingual education for the children of some of these communities. However, the status of Arabic did not improve. In 1983, the then military rulers made an attempt to introduce Arabic into mainstream education, which, however, did not go far due probably to opposition from the secularist media and the intelligentsia (Abdalla et al., 2004). Arabic remained confined to madrasa education, which was brought under government management after the 1978 Madrasa Education Ordinance. A separate education board called Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (BMEB) was established in 1979 to oversee the development of curriculum and the administration of examinations. The *Dakhil* (Year 10) and *Alim* (Year 12) terminal qualifications of the madrasa system were granted a status equivalent to Secondary School Certificate

(SSC, Year 10) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC, Year 12) in the general education system in the mid-1980s.

Arabic may not have the potential for flourishing in the prevailing social environment. It is viewed as a sacred language by the practicing segment of the Muslim population, but the veneration of Arabic is unrelated to its everyday use. The traditional association of Arabic with madrasa education and the recent discourse on madrasa education as a “hotbed” of terrorism (Ahmad & Nelson, 2009; Moosa, 2015; Rao & Hossain, 2011) have contributed to a reputational damage to Arabic. If English in Bangladesh is linked to a social divide (Hamid & Jahan, 2015; Imam, 2005), Arabic can be linked to a religious divide within the Muslim population (Abdalla et al., 2004). The intolerance towards Arabic outside madrasa education can be understood as a secularist reaction to the name of the international airport in Dhaka being written in Arabic alongside Bangla and English. The Arabic representation is considered an instance of unacceptable Arabisation (Ahmed, 2016; Hashmi, 2015). As Ahmed (2016, n. p.) wrote:

As one approaches the terminal building, three signs welcome the visitor to “Hazrat Shahjalal Airport” – in Bangla, English and Arabic. Bangla and English are understandable, but what is the Arabic sign doing there? I have tremendous respect for Arabic-speakers, but no one speaks Arabic in Bangladesh, and therefore, that sign does not belong there. [The] Arabic language must not be conflated with Islam, which many of us love.

More recently, as de-islamisation has gained momentum in the post 9/11 world, the secularist media in Bangladesh have been trying to free Bangla from Arabic influence (Dil, 2012) using Sanskritised words to replace Arabic ones (Munir, 2015). Nonetheless, such ideological work may not deny the economic significance of Arabic. Foreign remittance is one of the key contributors to the national income, and it originates mainly from Arabic-speaking countries. These countries have provided skilled and unskilled employment to hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi workers for the past few decades. As Khan (2017, n. p.) reported: “Saudi Arabia, followed by the UAE, are the highest contributors to our remittance. Bangladesh received a total of \$7.72 bn from all eight countries in the Middle-East [...] in 2014–15.”

## Teaching and Learning of Arabic and Other Foreign Languages

Foreign languages have not been highly regarded in Bangladesh due to social, political and ideological reasons. Nationalist discourses have tended to value Bangla only, leaving little room for consideration of Arabic or other languages. English is the only foreign/second language that has been available for teaching and learning in mainstream education. This is mainly due to the colonial introduction of English and the recent recognition of its role as a global lingua franca. However, although policy and curricular investment in English has been substantial, outcomes of

English teaching have not been up to expectations (Hamid & Erling, 2016). In the absence of visionary thinking in education including regarding languages, diversification of foreign language provision has not been considered a policy priority. As Uddin (2012, n. p.) rightly noted: “[The] Bangladesh education system placed little value on foreign languages other than English or on understanding cultures other than our own.” He also expressed the view that the “[l]ack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages challenges our students’ ability to compete in the global marketplace”. It could be argued that the provision of languages other than English would be helpful in compensating for the modest outcomes of English learning.

While the national education system has been cut off from languages other than English, opportunities for learning foreign languages, including Arabic as private investment, are open to the public. Such a provision is elitist and is limited to the capital city. However, notable exceptions also exist.

Arabic language and literature has been available for study as a discipline in major public universities in the country. The public-sector Islamic University of Bangladesh and the private-sector International Islamic University Chittagong are two other institutions for such studies of Arabic language, literature and related fields. Arabic language courses together with other foreign languages have been offered by language institutes in several public universities. The Institute of Modern Languages of the University of Dhaka is a noteworthy example. The private university sector has taken up this initiative, as evidenced by the offering of foreign language courses in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, German, French and Korean. Examples include BRAC University Institute of Languages and Daffodil International University Language Institute.

The Ministry of Education has recently introduced a non-curricular foreign language programme for adults across the country. As part of this programme, languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Korean, German, French, Spanish and English, are available in three dozen government tertiary colleges in the country. Such initiatives are welcome, but they are inadequate for promoting positive social attitudes that would foster an appreciation of foreign languages.

### *Arabic in the Education System*

The teaching of Arabic in the early years is available in four streams of religious education. As presented in Table 6.2, these streams are associated with different types of madrasas, including *Nurani*, *Furqania/Hafizia*, *Aliya* and *Qawmi*. Of these, only *Aliya* madrasas receive government support and also follow government rules and regulations. *Nurani* and *Furqania/Hafezia* madrasas constitute efforts of local communities and are not part of any overarching administrative or curricular authority. *Qawmi* madrasas fall under such an authority, which is called *Befaulq Madrasil Arabia Bangladesh*. This agency serves as an education board for *Qawmi* madrasas,

**Table 6.2** Types of madrasas for learning Arabic in preprimary and primary years

Type of institution	Level	Entry age	Management	Curriculum	Teaching staff
Nurani	Preprimary	4–6 years	Private or mosque management, support through religious charities	Literacy, basic Islamic knowledge, recitation of the Quran	Teachers with Quranic literacy
Furkakina/Hafizia	Preprimary	4–6 years	Private or mosque management, support through religious charities	Basic Islamic knowledge, memorisation of the Quran, simple math, Arabic and Bengali	Teachers with Quranic literacy
Aliya	Primary to postgraduate level	6+ years	Managed by committees approved by Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board and supported by government through teachers' salary subvention	Religious and secular subjects	Teachers with credentials
Qawmi	Primary to postgraduate level	6+ years	Privately managed and supported through <i>zakat</i> , endowments and other charities	Qawmi board curricula; many use their own version of general formal education curriculum	Teachers with formal qualifications from Qawmi madrasas

Adapted from Asian Development Bank (2008, p. 14)

although it operates independently as a private system (Asian Development Bank, 2008).

The Aliya madrasa system is comparable to mainstream secular education in terms of structure and management. Qualifications achieved from this system are also comparable to those from mainstream education. Within the scope of this chapter, we will discuss the policy and planning of Arabic in this particular madrasa system. The primary level of education (Years 1 to 5) in this stream is called *Ibtedaye*. The *Ibtedaye* level can be part of secondary institutions called *Dakhil* madrasas. However, there are also institutions which provide only primary education. Based on this distinction, *Ibtedaye* madrasas are divided into two categories, as shown in Table 6.3.

The administration of Aliya madrasa education is managed by an education division within the Ministry of Education called the Directorate of Madrasa Education. Curricular, academic and examination aspects and materials for the system are managed by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (BMEB), as mentioned

**Table 6.3** Ibtedaye madrasas with numbers of students and teachers (BANBEIS, 2018)

Type of Ibtedaye madrasas	Number of madrasas	Enrolment		Teachers	
		Total	Percentage of female	Total	Percentage of female
Attached Ibtedaye	9159	1,339,286	50.11%	28,857	13.60%
Independent Ibtedaye	4312	688,169	49.99%	19,592	24.77%

previously. This system of education follows locally produced textbooks published by BMEB and the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB).

### *Arabic in Ibtedaye Madrasas*

Since Arabic is part of madrasa education, its teaching goals and learning outcomes need to be articulated within the goal of madrasa education. The latest national education policy (Ministry of Education, 2010) includes a short chapter on madrasa education which identifies aims and strategies for this stream of education. Although different levels of mainstream education (e.g. primary, secondary and tertiary) are discussed in separate chapters in this key policy document, its two-page presentation of the entire madrasa system in a single chapter may indicate the level of policy priority for different streams of education in the country. The policy identifies four aims and objectives of madrasa education. These are related to:

- cementing students' firm belief in Allah with an understanding of the true meaning of Islam and its various principles and practices;
- developing students' moral character;
- motivating students to preach and propagate the virtues of Islam by embodying those virtues in their characters and manners; and
- educating students in secular subjects for different levels of mainstream education. (Adapted from Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 19)

The last aim might have been motivated by social justice considerations. Madrasa education in Bangladesh and in other countries has been criticised for its alleged irrelevance in preparing graduates for the job market (Barkat et al., 2011; Rao & Hossain, 2011). Therefore, studying the subjects taught in secular education is expected to foster the development of knowledge and skills as is done in secular education. The policy clearly points out that the primary level of education across streams will include the same set of learning areas:

At the Ibtedaye level, curriculum of different classes will be coordinated in tune with other streams including the compulsory subjects such as, Bangla, English, Moral Science, Bangladesh Studies, General Mathematics, Social Environment, Environmental Science with the inclusion of the concepts of 'climate change', and Information Technology. These subjects will be compulsory for all. (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 19)

The presence of secular learning content means madrasa graduates “will be enabled to equally compete with the students of general and English medium [systems]” (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.19). While this policy may have aimed at empowering madrasa graduates and supporting them in the current climate of social stigmatisation and economic marginalisation (Hamid, 2016), what is not taken into account is the consequence of a “crowded curriculum”. This perception of the madrasa curriculum is justified when compared with the mainstream curriculum. Within the same instructional timeframe, madrasa students are required to study secular subjects, along with a religious curriculum which includes Arabic, the Quran, Hadith and various aspects of Islam. From the language point of view, madrasa students are required to learn two foreign languages (Arabic and English) from the first day at school while developing literacy in Bangla, the national language. Given that madrasas are located mainly in rural areas and the majority of madrasa students are from low-income families (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2016; Barkat et al., 2011), Standard Bangla may be another second language for them as they would have access to its local dialects only in their daily life.

These three languages, together with other secular and religious subjects, are taught in the under-resourced conditions of Ibtedaye madrasas (Fig. 6.1). While all forms of education in rural Bangladesh suffer from minimal resources and facilities, madrasas have the least access to them (Hamid, 2016). The Arabic curriculum policy discussed in the next section is implemented in this under-resourced condition with manifold constraints.

### *Curriculum Policy for Arabic*

Curriculum policy refers to what aspects of the language are taught, to what extent and how. The madrasa education curriculum was revised and updated in light of the 2010 National Education Policy. Although this policy does not specifically mention Arabic, the curriculum document endorses the value of Arabic on religious as well as material grounds:

Arabic is one of the oldest living languages in the world. It is the national language in 22 countries. It is the language of two main sources of Islam including the Quran and Sunnah [the Prophetic tradition]. Moreover, the majority of the key sources of Islamic knowledge including the study of Islamic belief, jurisprudence and Quranic interpretations are written in Arabic. So the significance of Arabic is immense for Muslims on religious (as well as material) grounds.

Regardless of race and religion, the Arabic language bears special significance for Bangladesh. Bangladesh has close political and economic relationships with the Arab World. Consequently, a large number of Bangladeshis have been employed in different professions in the Arab countries. It is timely to teach Arabic to our students for material benefits of our citizens. (Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, 2012, p. 74, our translation)

Based on this policy/curricular significance, the value of Arabic can be seen as territorially bound. Its religious significance is located in Bangladesh for learning





**Fig. 6.1** A typical Arabic teaching classroom in rural Bangladesh. (Photo by authors)

about and practising Islam, while its economic significance lies in the Middle East, where skilled and semi-skilled workers from Bangladesh find employment. The economic significance of Arabic has been attested by several studies on migrant workers in the Arab world (Erling et al., 2019) and their families (Rao & Islam, 2011). While an inclusive policy rationale for Arabic (religious as well as material) may align with motivational diversity for learning Arabic, the educational significance of studying Arabic to learn about and understand culture and its peoples is missed.

In line with English language teaching in the mainstream and the madrasa system, Arabic teaching follows a skills-based curriculum to be implemented by a broad-based communicative approach. Following this approach, Arabic learning goals for the 5-year primary curriculum are set up as terminal competencies in the four areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing:

#### Listening

- Develop an understanding of the structure of the Arabic language
- Comprehend and enjoy rhymes, poems and stories from listening
- Comprehend conversations, descriptions, numbers and everyday phrases from listening

### Speaking

- Speak the language by demonstrating an understanding of its structure
- Recite rhymes, poems, conversations, stories, descriptions, numbers and everyday phrases
- Speak about simple topics with classmates and other participants with correct pronunciation
- Give opinions and express feelings about general topics in simple Arabic

### Reading

- Read fluently with clear and correct pronunciation
- Read rhymes, poems, conversations, stories, descriptions, numbers and everyday phrases
- Read hand-written and printed texts

### Writing

- Write clearly, legibly and correctly
- Write rhymes, poems, conversations, stories, descriptions, numbers and everyday phrases
- Express views in Arabic sentences clearly and correctly
- Write simple letters and applications and fill in forms. (Adapted and translated from Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, 2012)

It is expected that by the end of Year 5, students will be able to understand simple Arabic conversations and read, write and speak Arabic.

The curriculum document maps these terminal competencies into different year levels following the skills approach. For each year level, each competency is broken down into specific learning objectives. This mapping also includes suggestions for teaching strategies and resources.

School teachers in Bangladesh usually do not have direct access to the curriculum document. They access the curricular goals through textbooks, which are freely distributed to schools and madrasas. Textbooks are also available in digital format on the website of the NCTB, the agency responsible for producing textbooks and curriculum, as mentioned previously. The Arabic language curriculum document includes a set of instructions for writing Arabic textbooks for all primary year levels. The instructions outline the variety of Arabic (Saudi Arabian) and orthographic and pronunciation rules, the recommended approach to follow (syntactic), lesson content and skills-based activities, methods for presenting lessons and classroom-based assessment. There are also instructions about the size of the book, font size and graphics. Following these instructions, textbooks are written by experts who are usually loyal to the current regime.

Textbooks are the only official materials that teachers have access to in teaching Arabic. Although the teacher's guide (see subsequent discussion) refers to accessing resources from the Internet, the use of computers and the Internet is rare in rural under-resourced madrasas. Moreover, without teacher training and instructions on technology use, it may be unjustified to expect teachers to implement

technology-mediated teaching and learning. But teachers may also use commercial guidebooks in their teaching, which is common in the education system (Ali & Hamid, 2020).

The space given to Arabic or any other subject in the curriculum is limited. Because the madrasa system must teach both religious and secular subjects, as previously noted, the 5-hour-per-day instruction time (including breaks) needs to accommodate seven teaching areas. Each lesson for a teaching area has a duration of 35–40 min at the primary level. Arabic is allocated three lessons per week. This instruction time is insufficient, which makes it unrealistic to have high expectations for learning outcomes. Nevertheless, teachers are instructed to make Arabic classroom instruction sufficient in itself without relying on what students may be able to do outside school. As the relevant instructions for teachers point out:

Teachers have to make sure that everyday lessons are learnt by students in the classroom and that students do not have to study much at home. Many parents/guardians cannot speak Arabic. So it has to be ensured that students can learn without expecting assistance from them. (Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, 2018, p. 66, our translation)

Teachers are also required to cover the entire syllabus (i.e. all lessons in the textbook) in one academic year divided into two semesters. How teachers manage the teaching and what language learning experience students have in the classroom will require ethnographic investigation. However, our informal conversations with Arabic teachers indicate that while they are slowed down by policy and curricular pressures, they mainly pursue test content as a survival strategy. In an academic culture dominated by tests, teaching to the tests and the social significance of grades (Ali et al., 2020), madrasa teachers may not be doing anything different.

Each of the Arabic textbooks called *Addarsul Arabia* at the primary level includes a short section at the end of the book which contains 12 guidelines for teachers (teacher's guide) about teaching. The opening section of the teacher's guide contextualises the teaching of Arabic and articulates teachers' roles and role expectations:

Arabic is a foreign language for us. The success of teaching such a language largely depends on teaching techniques and strategies. However, in the absence of significant training and professional skill development for teachers of Arabic, we have not achieved desired outcomes in teaching and learning of the language. Therefore, teachers have to make Arabic teaching successful by their sincere efforts, individual creativity and personal study and learning. (Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, 2018, p. 66, our translation)

This may be a rare example of an unequivocal acknowledgement of educational failure (not achieving desired outcomes) at the policy level. The failure is attributed, quite reasonably, to the lack of training and learning opportunities for teachers. However, policy failure must be compensated by teachers through personal effort and achievement of goals regardless of resources and support (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016).

The 12 instructions for teachers from the book (Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, 2018) can be grouped into the following topics/themes:

1. Implementing a skills-based approach
2. Using correct pronunciation and error-free instruction
3. Implementing instruction only in Arabic to the extent possible

4. Providing feedback in Arabic
5. Organising each lesson in three phases
6. Using different kinds of materials
7. Completing lessons in class every day
8. Ensuring student achievement of annual terminal competencies
9. Teaching grammar points through activities
10. Creating a conversational atmosphere for speaking proficiency development
11. Implementing pair, group and class work
12. Completing the book in 1 year

While a communication-oriented, skills-based approach can be discerned in this set of instructions, the view of errors represented (i.e. teachers have to make lessons error-free because once students learn errors, it will be difficult to eradicate them) reflects behaviouristic thinking. The emphasis on the use of Arabic, as far as possible, as the medium for teaching and learning appears reasonable. The five textbooks are written in Arabic. Bangla is used only occasionally for teaching meanings of Arabic words, phrases and expressions. Teachers are instructed to finish the book within the timeframe to ensure pedagogical accountability. Given these policy expectations and authoritative instructions on the one hand and curricular and resource constraints on the other, the gap between policy and practice in terms of goals and outcomes is predictable. Classroom-based ethnographic research is needed to illuminate what actually happens in the classroom – how teachers and students make sense of the policy and engage with the curriculum with infrastructural, logistical, curricular and pedagogical constraints.

## Discussion and Implications

This chapter has examined the policy and planning of Arabic as a primary-level foreign language in the religious stream of education in Bangladesh with reference to curriculum policy. The examination included the contextualisation of Arabic from a historical perspective and situating it in the local linguistic ecology. We also discussed social, political and ideological issues which would have an impact on the policy and practice of Arabic. We suggest that the teaching of Arabic faces critical challenges both within and beyond the implementational space. Within this space, the policy ambition of utilising Arabic language skills for spiritual and material goals is inadequately supported by infrastructure and resources, insufficient planning of personnel development and unrealistic curriculum policies. The policy aim of creating opportunities for madrasa students to compete with students from secular education systems has been translated into a curricular burden for students who need to study both religious and secular subjects, including three languages. Madrasa teachers are entrusted with the implementational burden of delivering a mega curriculum with limited education and training, resources or professional support. Although teachers are expected to deliver the double curriculum of religious and secular education, the madrasa system does not receive even the level of resource support that is available for mainstream education. In particular, the “neoliberal turn” in English language education (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hamid &

Rahman, 2019) has led to greater recognition of the value of English and reasonable investment. For example, project-based language interventions, which are common in the country, focus almost exclusively on English (Hamid, 2010; Rahman, 2015). Further, as a national language, Bangla cannot be ignored by policymakers. However, Arabic has not received sufficient investment, probably because the language is meant only for a segment of the Muslim population which has been caught up in the local and global politics of representation. In this ideological context, policy investment in Arabic may be seen as politically incorrect for a secular government which may be accused of being supportive of communalism and communal education. Therefore, it may be suggested that the policy of Arabic has been “dumped” (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016) on madrasas, teachers and students. Policy has provided curricular access to Arabic with skeletal infrastructure, resources and personnel. It may be up to teachers and students to pursue language outcomes as envisaged by policy.

Under such circumstances, no miracle has been forthcoming in the teaching and learning of Arabic. It is widely acknowledged that of all streams of education (see Hossain & Tollefson, 2007), the greatest concern with quality as well as social utility is associated with the madrasa sector (Abdallah et al., 2004; Hamid, 2016). Although every year the madrasa system reports Dakhil and Alim examination pass rates which are comparable to the SSC and HSC pass rates, this reporting of a high level of achievement may be a strategic manoeuvre to meet accountability requirements. It may also be interpreted as a pre-emptive measure to evade further criticisms of the madrasa sector by secular media and intellectuals on the grounds of performance. Also, as in the school sector, high pass rates in madrasa education may not necessarily reflect quality of teaching or learning achievement (Ali et al., 2020).

In relation to Arabic in particular, to what extent primary students achieve the curricular goal of developing basic competence may be an important question to ask. However, we do not have an answer because we do not have the data. Existing madrasa-based assessment practices, with their focus on formal and structural considerations, may not provide helpful indicators of functional or literacy achievement. It may seem surprising that limited attempts have been made to understand the level of achievement in a language that has been taught in the system for years. However, this is not a surprise, especially for madrasa education, in Bangladesh, considering the policy priorities. Developing an evaluation policy that could be used to determine Arabic learning achievement in madrasas needs to become a policy priority (see conclusions).

## Conclusions

Although students have been given access to Arabic in the earliest grade of the madrasa curriculum, this access has not been matched by a concomitant level of resource injection and the provision of qualified teachers, teacher remuneration or professional development opportunities. The crowded madrasa curriculum at the

primary level has too much to accommodate in terms of teaching areas (religious and secular) and languages (Bangla, English and Arabic). In such a situation, no language or subject area can be adequately covered. Arabic is also unlikely to thrive as a language in society given the enduring ideological views of Arabic, madrasa education and teachers and students of the madrasa system. The recent push towards de-islamisation in the name of secularisation of society may make the position of Arabic even less encouraging in coming years. Policymakers may feel complacent about having implemented a generous curriculum and finding an innovative educational solution to complex social issues of disadvantage and marginalisation of madrasa students compared to Bangla- and English-medium students. However, our analysis in the chapter does not suggest the likelihood of the policy producing significant effects in educational or social terms.

Making a set of policy recommendations for Arabic in this space may be interpreted as simply routine intellectual work. Nevertheless, we would suggest that Arabic be treated as an integral component of the local linguistic ecology whose potential can be harnessed for identity and social cohesion on the one hand and instrumentality on the other. Research is urgently needed to determine what is going on in the madrasa classroom, how Arabic is taught, how much learning is happening, and what factors are having a direct impact on teaching and learning practices. The findings of this proposed research may suggest practice and evidence-informed recommendations for Arabic teaching in the madrasa system. If we do not undertake such work, what has already been invested in terms of policy, curriculum and resources might be seen as an inexcusable waste.

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# Chapter 7

## Early English Language Learning in Tanzania in Relation to Language Policy



Eustard R. Tibategeza and Theodorus du Plessis

**Abstract** This chapter explains the sociolinguistic context associated with English language learning in the education system in Tanzania. The envisaged challenges related to English learning as a result of the 2014 Education and Training Policy are addressed in this context. The chapter further explores the difficulties encountered by students in language learning in the early stages in primary and secondary schools and the strategies adopted by schools to enable the students to learn English. This discussion is based on the Education and Training Policy of 1995 and 2014 (United Republic of Tanzania, Education and Training Policy. MoEC, Dar es Salaam, 1995; Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania [United Republic of Tanzania], Sera ya elimu na mafunzo [Education and training policy]. Wizara ya Elimu na Mafunzo ya Ufundi [Ministry of Education and Vocational Training], Dar es Salaam 2014). The chapter adopts Kaplan and Baldauf's (Language planning: from theory to practice. Multilingual Matters Ltd, Toronto, 1997; Language and language-in-education planning in the Pacific Basin. Kluwer Academic Publishers, London, 2003) curriculum policy because English in Tanzania has been selected based on the criteria developed in the education sector. The chapter considers the learning of English alongside other activities in the school system, which can affect the learning of English, particularly among young learners. Language instruction in primary and secondary schools poses difficulties to students in terms of motivation and unrealistic achievement expectations. The chapter has implications for policymakers, teachers, parents and students as it determines whether language policy in Tanzania will contribute to better or worse learning of the language in students' early years.

**Keywords** Language policy · Medium of instruction · English language · Education · Policymakers

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## Introduction

This chapter examines the sociolinguistic context associated with early English language learning in the education system in Tanzania. This is done by conducting an analysis of the language policy related to the teaching of English as a foreign language in primary and secondary schools. Students in primary and secondary schools are first introduced to the language because most of them have home languages or Kiswahili as their first language before they start their education in schools. The envisaged challenges related to English learning as a result of the 2014 Education and Training Policy are addressed in this context. The chapter further explores the difficulties encountered by students in early language learning in primary and secondary schools and the strategies which are adopted by schools to ensure students learn English are identified. This is discussed based on the Education and Training Policy of 1995 and 2014 (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 1995; Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania [United Republic of Tanzania], 2014). The analysis also draws on information obtained from the interviews, class observations and focus group discussions conducted.

The chapter adopts Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997, 2003) curriculum policy because English in Tanzania was selected based on the criteria developed in the education sector. The chapter considers early English learning alongside other activities in the school system which can affect the language learning. The medium of instruction (MoI) in primary and secondary schools may pose difficulties to students in terms of motivation and unrealistic achievement.

Tanzania is a multilingual country with 150 languages spoken across the country. Each ethnic group uses its own language as a primary basis of ethnic identity. However, the Education and Training Policy of 1995 recognises Kiswahili and English as languages of education at different levels. Kiswahili is an official and national language and, according to the same policy, is used as the MoI in pre-primary and primary education. On the other hand, English is a co-official language and MoI at the post-primary education level. It is only taught as a compulsory subject in pre-primary and primary education in all public schools. It is emphasised in the Education and Training Policy of 1995 that English is to be taught from the first year of primary education with anticipation that at the end of the seven years of primary education, students will have acquired and developed mastery of English language proficiency demanded at the secondary and post-secondary levels.

However, the recent Education and Training Policy of 2014 foresaw that Kiswahili would become a medium of instruction at all levels of education. Once Kiswahili becomes the MoI, English will be taught as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools. Given the fact that the previous version of the policy of 1995 actually required English to be taught as a subject from an early age and to be used as the MoI, the question arises whether learners can adequately master English within the new system. Due to misconceptions held by education stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents and politicians, once English is taught as a subject, learners may not be able to learn and use it for meaningful academic and

pedagogical purposes. Many education stakeholders in Tanzania believe that the introduction of Kiswahili as the MoI at all levels of education could result in the country being cut off from the international community. Parents who are economically competent may resist the proposed policy and take their children to English-medium schools for their children to learn English in their early years.

This chapter has implications for policymakers, teachers, parents and students as it will determine whether language policy in Tanzania will contribute to better or worse learning of the language of the young children in the school system.

## Linguistic Background in Tanzania

Tanzania is a multilingual country with almost 150 home languages spoken across the country. Each ethnic group uses its own language as a primary basis for its identity (Tibategeza, 2013). However, Kiswahili and English are the only languages recognised and used in official business. Marah-Hanak (2011) submits that “Kiswahili has a strong quota in the country as it is spoken by more than 90 per cent of the population” (p. 78). Telli (2014) further indicates that “... practically, English [in Tanzania] is considered an academic language while Kiswahili as a language of daily communication” (p. 10). In Tanzania, although English continues to be a prestigious language of secondary and higher education, professionalism and international communication, Kiswahili is the primary language of interaction at the national level, being firmly established in such domains as basic education, administration, political debate and a significant portion of development communication (Marah-Hanak, 2011). Kiswahili is a common language used in all government business, in the streets and by most urban families.

Marah-Hanak (2011) rightly describes the rest of the languages in Tanzania as being restricted to the domains of home, village, local informal contexts and cultural performances. Marah-Hanak is of the view that “[m]ultilingualism in Tanzania is not a neutral expression of linguistic plurality, but rather a reflection of the history of colonialism in a distinct pattern of social inequality – a constituent feature of the postcolonial predicament” (p. 78). This is in line with what Tumbo-Masabo (1999) states: “[d]uring the German rule in Tanzania, home languages were not given priority but only used in local administration. This caused the languages to have very low status as compared to English and Kiswahili” (p. 2). What is witnessed today in terms of the negligence of home languages in Tanzania may be attributed to the status conferred on them during colonialism. Abdullah (2009) cites a pertinent example from Australia: “... although there is no official provision for early childhood education to provide services that offer instruction in the home languages of children (coming from non-English speaking families), there is a stated policy that all languages are honoured and respected” (167). In this case, children who use home languages in school settings are not punished.

The current sociolinguistic situation in Tanzania necessitates the continued use of Kiswahili as a unifying language. The majority of urban children now actually

acquire it as their first language. It is also the language most frequently used in government offices as well as in everyday activities nationwide (Tibategeza, 2009). Conversely, English is rarely heard outside the classroom, except in transactions involving a foreigner. For this reason, Brock-Utne (2005) claims that “There are not many Tanzanians who need English in their daily lives as all communication outside the classroom is either in the vernacular languages or in Kiswahili, which dominates in most domains in Tanzania” (p. 180). In view of this, she proposes that Kiswahili be a language of instruction at all levels of education and that English be taught as a subject. Similarly, Rubagumya (2007) points out some weaknesses in the implementation of the language policy. He stresses that “whereas initiative to extend linguistic rights to citizens comes from the state, the same state puts in place impediments to the implementation of these initiatives” (p. 7). He gives an example of the *Cultural Policy* document released by the government in 1997 recognising the importance of all home languages of Tanzania, but the same languages remain banned in the mass media.

When analysing the current practice regarding home languages in Tanzania, Tibategeza (2013) observes that such languages are not used in the media. He stresses that there is no local TV channel or radio station that broadcasts in any of the more than 150 home languages. The same is true with numerous newspapers around the country, which are either in Kiswahili or English. He points out further that home languages are forbidden to be used in political election campaigns. Tibategeza gives an example of how the National Electoral Commission (NEC) categorically forbade political parties in the 2010 general election in Tanzania to use any such languages as this would constitute a violation of the election rules and regulations (Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania [United Republic of Tanzania], 2010, p. 6). He emphasises that home languages in Tanzania are not used at any level of education throughout the education system. Students in public pre-primary and primary schools are actually punished for speaking home languages on school premises.

Furthermore, home languages are not used to write the minutes of village meetings. As indicated earlier, home languages are generally used in day-to-day activities in rural areas. People at such meetings use their home language. However, the minutes are always recorded in Kiswahili because it is the national language (Tibategeza, 2013). Those villagers who are not conversant in Kiswahili are thus denied the opportunity to make follow-up comments or questions about whatever decisions might be posed at such meetings.

## Curriculum Policy

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) submit that “Once education policy in a polity has been determined, there are some issues to be examined as part of any language-in-education policy implementation programme” (p. 127). These have to do with policy issues in language-in-education, namely curriculum, personnel, materials,

community and evaluation policies. This chapter adopts Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997, 2003) curriculum policy because English in Tanzania was selected based on the criteria developed in the education sector. The chapter considers the early learning of English alongside other activities in the school system which can affect the learning of English.

Kaplan and Baldauf further argue that when the language to be taught in schools is selected basing on the criteria developed in the education sector, the focus then falls on curriculum issues. Since school time is limited by the many and various activities included in the curriculum, the primary concern is on the space that should be allocated to language instruction. Decision makers in this connection will have to consider the activities already in the curriculum and see how they can be squeezed or gradually removed without necessarily affecting the education system. They indicate that "It is likely to be a difficult decision to make because some issues, such as HIV/AIDS, family education and practical subjects for graduates to get well-paid jobs or become self-employed, are in the curriculum due to societal pressure calling for their inclusion" (p. 128). On the other hand, some social groups may already have a feeling that their subject is under-represented. All these considerations lead to the realisation of how difficult it might be when language instruction must be added to the curriculum. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) make the following observation:

The other critical issue with regard to curriculum policy lies in the time to start language instruction. This involves duration for language instruction and intensity for its administration. This also creates a problem of space in the curriculum due to the fact that the earlier the language education is introduced the greater the probability of its success, which in turn demands larger space in the curriculum for a greater duration. (p. 128)

Considering the number of contact hours needed for students to master a foreign language and the fact that some languages are more difficult to learn to read and write than others, language instruction may be regarded as not cost-effective and students' motivation is likely to be affected since achievement seems unrealistic. This is a result of the need to devise a model which permits communicative activities for language learning. To achieve this, class size needs to be reduced to create opportunities for student-student and student-teacher interaction. Under the circumstances prevailing in most African classrooms, dividing classes into small groups constitutes a daunting problem because it requires more human and material resources. This ties in with what Kamwendo (2006) claims "to be a practice in Africa where funding of language issues is not taken to be a priority". (p. 64)

## Language Learning Policies

In this section, language learning policies are discussed in terms of MoI, strategies adopted in schools to learn English and challenges anticipated in the implementation of the 2014 Education and Training Policy in Tanzania.

## *Medium of Instruction*

Three important documents have been released by the Tanzanian government regarding language policy. These are Education and Training Policy released in 1995 and the current version of 2014 and *Sera ya Utamaduni* [henceforth The Cultural Policy] released in 1997. The documents focus on educational and cultural issues in general, and each one has a chapter on language policy. The documents are reliable policy statements on language issues in Tanzania since independence. Before these documents were released, political statements and circulars were relied upon in connection with language policy (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995).

The Education and Training Policy document, which was released in 1995 by the government, discusses general issues regarding education and training in Tanzania. The need for the policy was based on the fact that past educational plans and programmes were only guided by short- and long-term development plans (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995). Before the release of the 1995 Education and Training Policy, the language used in pre-primary and primary schools was Kiswahili. According to Rugemalira (2005) only a few government schools and private schools used English to cater for diplomatic children.

The issue of language is presented in this document in connection with being a MoI, where the need for the development of communication skills in learners is emphasised at all levels. As far as English is concerned, the document stresses that English would be the compulsory subject in pre-primary and primary schools (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995, pp. 35 and 39). It is emphasised further that English is to be taught to pupils from their first year of primary education in the anticipation that by the end of the 7 years of primary education, pupils would have acquired and developed mastery of English language proficiency required at post-primary educational levels. In relation to this, Zein (2017) submits that “the micro-economic, political, social and global factors aligning with understanding of second language acquisition theories have driven policymakers to choose ‘who’ (i.e children) learn ‘what’ language and ‘when’”. (p. 422)

Explaining the English situation in Tanzania, Telli (2014) submits that “When a student in public primary school advances to secondary schools, the language of instruction swiftly changes from Kiswahili to English” (p. 10). He further notes that not enough is done to help students in this linguistic transition. For that matter, the learning becomes perplexing for most students in secondary schools because they lack a basic command of the English language, in this case a MoI at their tender age.

What the government of Tanzania did was in line with what Spolsky and Moon (2014) indicated, that “in recent years, there has been a tendency among many Asian countries to lower the starting age for formal English language education from the first year of junior secondary schools to the third year and even first year of elementary school” (p. 345). They further argue that the reasons for lowering the starting age to learn English language have to do with historical, political and economic factors because English is viewed as linguistic capital. According to Abdullah (2009), “Generally, the educational system in most countries utilises the national



language as the medium of instruction. However, multilingualism and the recognition of the pivotal role of language in learning makes it obligatory for diversity of language, literacies and common styles to be recognised, valued and used within all childhood services” (p. 167). That explains why the Education and Training Policy of 1995 emphasises the need to use English from pre-primary schools for a better foundation for children to learn it better.

For secondary schools’ MoI, the document stipulates that the MoI for secondary education shall continue to be English, except when it comes to teaching approved languages (Abdullah, 2009, p. 45). The rationale given in the document of why English is to be used as the MoI in post-primary education is that most instructional media and pedagogical materials are written in English, and it is assumed that the situation is likely to remain so for a long time in the foreseeable future. According to Telli (2014), “... policy-makers in Tanzania prefer to maintain the status quo (Kiswahili in Primary and English in higher levels) not primarily due to scientific or empirical evidence but due to the huge cost of implementation that relates to financial and human resources”. (p. 13)

People may decide to use a particular language because of their belief that it is a language widely accepted with economic and prestige power. For that matter, well-to-do parents prefer that their children attend schools where such languages are taught and used as MoIs. A study conducted by Rugemalira (2005) found that parents wanted their children to master English, and “the best way to do so was through English medium instruction” (p. 68). It was further noted that parents want their children to demonstrate their ability to speak English within the first few months of joining English-medium schools. In this case, Rugemalira (2005) makes an important point, that “parents are even prepared to transfer their children if they perceive the school is not doing enough to get children to speak English” (p. 70). This means that the early learning of English is a serious concern to most parents.

The government issued another document largely on cultural issues in Tanzania referred to as *Sera ya Utamaduni* [Cultural Policy] in 1997. The document was released on 23 August 1997. The language issue is presented in Chapter 3 in this document. Kiswahili is described in this document as a language spoken and understood by a majority of the country. It is therefore stipulated that “Kiswahili shall be pronounced the national language and this pronouncement shall be incorporated in the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania” (United Republic of Tanzania, 1997 p. 16). To support this, “the National Kiswahili Council and other institutions responsible for the promotion of Kiswahili shall be strengthened and adequately resourced in order to enable them to discharge their functions” (United Republic of Tanzania, p. 17). This was seen as a response to a long-standing activist cry to make Kiswahili a MoI at all levels of education in Tanzania. It is important to emphasise here that, by using Kiswahili as a MoI, activists are in favour of proficiency for both Kiswahili and English since both languages are equally important in the academic arena.

As for foreign languages, the document demonstrates an awareness of their importance in communicating with people outside of Tanzania in connection with commercial activities. It is therefore stated that “English shall be a compulsory

subject in pre-primary, primary and secondary education levels and shall be encouraged in higher education” (United Republic of Tanzania, 18). This is in line with what Iman (2005) claims: “Undeniably, today English is increasingly becoming the dominant global language whereby both West and East, have become equally busy promoting it” (p. 480). It is assumed now that for the country to benefit from globalisation through the free movement of labour and capital, education needs to assume its role in the education system. That is why in Japan, for example, most universities have an English language section as part of their entrance examinations, where all the applicants study English very diligently to pass the tests (Hosoki, 2011). Hosoki emphasises that “English is encouraged in most university curricula, and almost all students – even non-English majors – have to take English language classes during their first two years” (pp. 205–206). According to Brining (2015), education appears to have become a product for export and the English language a commodity to be bought, sold and traded, with teachers becoming suppliers of that commodity. That is why McKay (1992) suggests that “... teaching English is infused with social and political significance because of the power English has to open access to business, technology, travel, science academic study, research and economic success” (p. 3).

The Cultural Policy document further stresses the MoI to be used at all levels of education in Tanzania. It is asserted that the use of English at post-primary education levels has tremendously affected education in general and Kiswahili in particular in the country. The document takes into account the fact that few people can understand, speak and write in foreign languages. This echoes what scholars (Bachore, 2014; Bikongoro, 2015; Marwa, 2014; Rubanza, 2002; Qorro, 2005; Sario et al., 2014; Young, 2009) continue to emphasise – that learners can only actively participate in knowledge creation if they are allowed to use the language they understand very well, which is in most cases the language they usually speak in their day-to-day life.

According to the Canadian Ministry of Education document of 2005, the use of first languages in classrooms enhances learners’ development of English proficiency, supports their sense of identity and self-confidence, and promotes positive attitudes towards language learning among all students, including English speakers.

It is therefore stressed in the Cultural Policy that continuing to use English as the sole MoI at the post-primary level is tantamount to denying many people in the country the opportunity to benefit from science and technology in the twenty-first century. It is therefore stated that “A special programme to enable the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in education and training at all levels shall be designed and implemented” (United Republic of Tanzania, 1997, p. 19).

Although more than 20 years have passed since the Cultural Policy document was released, most of the recommended policies have not been implemented. For example, Kiswahili is not a language of instruction at all levels of education and the declaration that Kiswahili should be a national language has not been incorporated into the constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania (Tibategeza, 2009). According to the current Education and Training Policy, released in 2014, “The national language, Kiswahili, shall be used to teach and learn at all levels of

education and training and the government shall put in place a system to facilitate the use of this language to be sustainable and effective in providing education and training nationally and internationally” (Jamhuri ya Muungano wa Tanzania [United Republic of Tanzania], 2014, p. 38). As for English, the document states, “The government shall continue with the process of strengthening the use of English in teaching and learning at all levels of education and training” (United Republic of Tanzania, p. 38). This indicates that the government still values English as a language of wider communication that should be taught well as a subject from pre-primary schools.

### *Difficulties Encountered in Early English Learning*

A study by Tibategeza (2009) established that teachers of subjects other than English in secondary schools focus on subject content and never bother with the language issue when teaching or marking students’ assignments. In interviews and focus group discussions, such teachers echoed that every teacher is trained according to his/her specialisation, and to interfere with other people’s specialities was regarded as unprofessional. This aligns with the findings of other studies (Allen, 2008; Dyegula, 2009), which indicated that poor English teaching was evident as it was found that the majority of teachers in Tanzania had an insufficient command of English to be able to teach the language effectively. In this case, teaching of English to pre-primary children is regarded as a challenge because of the lack of competent teachers.

Qorro (2006, p. 3) reports correctly that “The language of instruction determines the quality of education. Language of instruction is the vehicle through which education is delivered.” Qorro says that the role of the MoI is like that of pipes carrying water from one destination to another. She concludes that when students and teachers understand the language of education for debating, discussing, asking and answering questions, that is when they can construct and generate meaning.

A study by Tibategeza (2009) focused on identifying the challenges associated with the implementation of language policy, particularly in English language learning. It was noted that teachers in primary and secondary schools are the victims of the system because they are also not competent enough in the English language. That makes it difficult to implement an official language policy that requires all subjects except Kiswahili to be taught in English. Similar results were reported by Qorro (2006) from classroom observations in some schools in Tanzania, where it was noted that the majority of teachers were seriously handicapped in using English as a MoI. Qorro emphasises that only a few students in classrooms could engage in active learning, while the majority only copied notes that their teachers wrote on the chalkboards.

The other problem noted was the large classes the teachers have to teach. Teachers reported that the student/teacher ratio is too high to the point where interaction which helps students to learn the target language is inhibited. Respondents stressed

that students cannot have meaningful group discussions, dramatisations, simulations and presentations which a teacher can supervise. What they do, according to teachers interviewed in primary and secondary schools, is to lecture, making the teacher the main speaker and the students passive listeners. They further said that, to help students, they write subject notes on the chalkboard for students to copy. This was also observed by Yogi (2017), who reports that “when observing classrooms, some teachers would have the entire lesson written in English on the blackboard instead of instructing their students verbally” (p. 2). Moreover, O’Connor and Geiger (2009) found in their study that “having very little exposure to English at home, and tending to speak in their home language to peers at school, many learners may not even have had adequate basic interpersonal communication skills in English language thereby affecting their cognitive academic language proficiencies in English” (p. 259).

### *Strategies Adopted for Early English Learning*

In order for young learners to master English, apart from the normal classroom teaching, schools in Tanzania have put in place some strategies aimed at supplementing classroom teaching. The first strategy is the use of the “speak English campaign” on school premises. In most schools, one is likely to find signposts labelled “SPEAK ENGLISH” and “NO ENGLISH, NO SERVICE”. The school administration believes that the signposts normally remind all young learners that English is the MoI and the language of communication on school ground, and they must use it all the time. When students have a problem in teachers’ offices, they are expected to express themselves in English if they want to receive help. Teachers are also encouraged to make sure that they speak English when interacting with students in all situations. According to Komba and John (2015), the purpose of requiring students to speak English on school premises “... is to create a kind of English speech community at school where pupils are immersed in English to enable them to see how English is used in actual communication” (p. 56).

The second strategy is to hold debates among students. Students, in collaboration with English teachers, organise debate competitions at and outside school. In these competitions, the students debate issues on specific topics, and judges, who are normally English teachers, assess the arguments and determine who the best performers are in terms of fluency, audibility, confidence and persuasion. The school administration normally rewards the best performers. This gives young learners the opportunity, not only to practise the target language, but also to improve their communication skills. According to Qorro (2005, 2006), “Observation in some secondary schools in Tanzania shows that most students and the majority of teachers are seriously handicapped when it comes to using English as a language of instruction” (p. 5). Therefore, the introduction of debates in schools is intended to assist students in acquiring communication skills in English. If students accomplish this, using English on a variety of topics, then most schools may avoid Mtallo’s (2015)

concerns that "... teaching English in Tanzania is more theoretical than practical and it does not consider the needs and interests of the learners but it is premised on political experiences". (p. 119)

The other strategy, which is equally significant in terms of encouraging young learners to use and practice English, is the essay competition. In this strategy, students are given different themes on which to write essays in English. This is done in the form of interclass or even interschool competitions in neighbourhoods. The essays are judged by selected teachers, and the administrations present the winners with an awarded. Sometimes, the winners are required to present to their fellow students the ideas they had included in their essays, and the students are allowed to ask questions. This gives all students the chance to interact in English, and it allows them to use the target language.

The use of a class library is another technique used in Tanzanian schools to help students learn English early in their schooling. With this technique, English teachers encourage young learners to read short stories from books distributed to them in class. They are then expected to read and summarise the stories in their own words and explain what they learned from the stories. Students are free to ask questions, and the reader responds to questions under the guidance of the teacher. This technique, apart from giving students the chance to read as many books as they can, it also gives them the opportunity to master other language skills necessary for language learning.

Furthermore, schools in Tanzania use remedial classes to help poor students with their English. English teachers identify weak students in their classes and, in collaboration with the school administration and parents, arrange remedial classes after school. In such classes, weak students get extra lessons on certain aspects of the language to help them improve their English. They are given exercises to help them improve in areas where their teachers think they need assistance. The other strategy used in schools to ensure young learners master English is the use of corporal punishment for students caught speaking Kiswahili or other home languages on school premises. Teachers come up with various ways to find out who is violating the rule about always speaking English. In this way, students either speak English or keep quiet. Although this is not the best way to make students learn the target language, in this case English, teachers do support it and claim that such pressure compels students to put more effort in learning English so as to avoid punishment. However, the practice instils fear among students, which could foster hatred for teachers and administrators and end up with results opposite of the desired goal. In a study by Mpemba (2007, pp. 93–94) on administrative sanctions or regulations that enforce the continued use of English, it was revealed that such rules as "SPEAK ENGLISH ONLY WHEN YOU ARE IN SCHOOL COMPOUND", "NO ENGLISH NO SERVICE", and corporal punishment for those who speak their home languages were put in place in the majority of secondary schools.

## Challenges Envisaged Through the 2014 Education and Training Policy

The 2014 Education and Training Policy revealed the government's intent to make Kiswahili a MoI at all levels of education. Based on the sociolinguistic environment in Tanzania, this might affect the teaching and learning of English, particularly in secondary schools. As was explained earlier, schools have put in place strategies to encourage students to learn the target language, English. One strategy is the Speak English campaign, where students are expected to use English all the time on school premises. English is both a MoI and a language of communication. Students are punished severely if they act against this campaign. Now that Kiswahili is slated to replace English as a MoI and, hence, a language of communication among students and teachers, students will not have the opportunity to practise the target language at school. The exposure to English they had become accustomed to at school will now be limited since English will be taught as a compulsory subject.

According to Telli (2014), "Kiswahili, apart from being the official language in Tanzania, is the language of wider communication, parliament, trade and commerce throughout the country" (p. 10). This is in line with what Tibategeza (2009) reports:

The current sociolinguistic situation in Tanzania necessitates the continued use of Kiswahili as a unifying language. The majority of urban children now actually acquire it as their first language. It is also the language most frequently used in government offices as well as in everyday activities countrywide. Conversely, English is rarely heard outside the classroom, except in transactions involving a foreigner. (p. 16)

In this case, students are likely to be affected when the 2014 Education and Training Policy is implemented. Telli (2014) points out that "by using Kiswahili as a language of instruction, activists are supporting the proficiency of both languages, English and Kiswahili" (p. 13). This is supported by Qorro (2006), who emphasizes that if Kiswahili is made the language of instruction and English is taught well as a subject, learners could build the foundation for learning English on that knowledge base previously acquired in Kiswahili. However, the concern here is on how English can be taught well enough for students to master it. Rubagumya, responding to Gran's (2007) question regarding English language instruction in Tanzania, had this to say:

There is a discrepancy between policy and practice with regard to the medium of instruction in the Tanzanian school system. The policy is to use English, but teachers continually use Kiswahili to enable better understanding. Students are not proficient enough in English to follow the lectures, so teachers have to improvise. They are only pretending in a sense to be using English as a medium of instruction. (p. 58)

What Rubagumya is saying is important as far as the teaching of English in Tanzania is concerned. The teachers themselves are victims of the system, where they are not competent enough to teach students. Thus, if Kiswahili is made the MoI, then students' opportunities for learning and mastering English will be limited.

## Implications

This chapter has implications for policymakers, teachers, parents and students by determining whether language policy in Tanzania contributes to better or worse learning of English. It makes a contribution to early English language learning not only in Tanzania but in most African countries. It explores the strategies used by teachers, students and parents to enable the learning of English. The analysis presented offers in-depth perspectives on the complexity of language policy formulation that are of great value for future planning of English language learning.

For educators of early language learning, this chapter implies that the earlier the learners are exposed to English with competent teachers, teaching and learning facilities and a conducive school environment, the better the learners position to master English in Tanzania. The challenges noted in this chapter as far as learning English is concerned can be minimised if ministry directives are well implemented regarding the student-teacher ratio, teaching and learning materials and the competence-based curriculum. Future research studies can be directed at teaching approaches used in Tanzania. This would yield results in terms of the way teachers and students are able to master English as the current MoI at post-primary levels of education.

The envisaged goal in Tanzania of having bilingual citizens will be difficult to achieve in current educational settings if only Kiswahili or English is allowed to dominate as the sole language of instruction in primary and secondary education, respectively. This will effectively lead to monolingual instruction, which will prevent bilingualism in education. The language policy to make Kiswahili a MoI and having English emphasised in teaching and learning would lead to additive bilingualism in Tanzania. There is therefore a need to devote effort and resources to developing a model that can shed light on how to promote strong bilingualism in Tanzanian education policy as far as early language learning is concerned. The policy would cater for the implementation of a language programme that requires a robust language policy based on research findings. The policy must state categorically the goal of promoting bilingual education and systematically show how that goal can be achieved.

Updated directives on the implementation of the language policy through the heads of schools, school district and regional education officers, and the quality assurance department should be furnished by the Ministry of Education. There should be no loopholes for some teachers or heads of schools to make decisions favouring their own interests, as this cannot work in a centralised curriculum. The policy should not be limited to the language of instruction but the overall linguistic context in the school.



## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on English language learning in connection with language policy in Tanzania. Kiswahili and English are recognised official languages among the numerous home languages with no official status. Kiswahili is also a national language spoken by the majority in Tanzania. However, Kiswahili is used as a MoI in pre-primary and primary schools, while English is a MoI in post-primary education (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995).

Studies have shown that when students enroll in secondary education, they face challenges in terms of using English as a MoI. The problem is compounded by the fact that teachers are also victims of the system since English is a foreign language to them. Some strategies have been adopted in schools to help students learn the MoI, in this case English.

The 2014 Education and Training Policy has as it stated intent to use Kiswahili, a language known by a majority of Tanzanians, as a MoI at all levels of education. This is a result of various studies conducted in Tanzania and elsewhere indicating that students can learn better in a language they know well. The policy insists that English be taught well enough for students to use it as a language of wider communication. This chapter sheds light on the existing literature in terms of policy formulation that aims to help students learn English and raise their proficiency in the language. Different stakeholders are expected to team up in this endeavour for the purpose of mastering the MoI.

It is anticipated further that the linguistic backdrop in Tanzania will be taken as an important capital for young learners in the education setting. Unfounded beliefs that bilingualism cognitively affects learners should be discouraged by policymakers, parents, teachers and other stakeholders. For children whose first language skills are less developed in certain respects, intensive exposure to a second language in the early grades is likely to impede continued progress in the first language.

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**Part III**  
**Preparing High Quality Teachers**

# Chapter 8

## Tradition and New Scenarios for Early English Language Learning Policy in Argentina



Cristina Banfi and Raymond Day

**Abstract** Early English language teaching has experienced steady growth in Argentina over the last two decades, expanding into diverse sectors, including state-run schools. It has responded to social demand and resulted in an increased number of learners across different contexts. This recent expansion builds on a tradition dating back to the early twentieth century that incorporated, as a central component, the specialised education of language teachers, at a time when this was uncommon elsewhere. The current scenario, or *English language teaching ecosystem*, as we call it herein, is one of increasing complexity and cross-pollination within the sector. However, it is not a perfectly harmonious ecosystem, especially as it struggles to maintain a sufficient supply of teachers and specifically designed teaching materials and other resources. This paper presents a review of the tradition of early English language teaching in Argentina, with a specific focus on programmes of teacher education, the recent expansion in provision and its main characteristics, and the challenges associated with continued expansion.

**Keywords** Early language learning · Language policy · Argentina · English language teaching

Early English language teaching has a long and recognised tradition in Argentina (Banfi, 2010), albeit one somewhat concentrated in certain regions of the country (the capital and its suburbs and some provincial capitals) and to self-selected or

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elite groups. The first instances of early foreign language teaching within the formal education system can be traced back to the turn of the twentieth century when French and English were taught to first graders as an initiative linked to the founding, in 1904, of a specialised teacher training college, the *Instituto Superior del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas*.

Simultaneous to this development, several privately run schools were founded, catering to those children who were members of the Anglo-Irish community, as well as others created by different immigrant communities. Even though these schools met resistance from officialdom, which saw them as divisive and contrary to the nation-building role of public education (on this, see for example Sarmiento, 1990), they would go on to be part of a large sub-sector of the education system of Argentina and, most particularly, the city and province of Buenos Aires, i.e. the so-called *colegios bilingües* (Banfi & Day, 2005) and the initiatives that can be analysed as heritage language maintenance, at least in their early days (Banfi, 2018a).

A third important area that contributed much to the expansion of English language learning is that of language schools, institutes or academies. These are privately run organisations that have as their central mission the teaching of a language, in this case English. Some of these organisations are non-profit, while others are commercial enterprises, and they provide English language tuition for (young) children, teenagers and adults. These are optional activities that are complementary to compulsory schooling. Within them students often prepare for external (international) language certifications which, while not officially recognised within the national education system, are accepted and valued in the job market and (some) higher education contexts.

What these three sectors have in common is self-selection and, to a certain extent, the existence of resources, whether material or symbolic, on the part of parents who opt for these programmes for their children. Some recent initiatives, however, have involved the expansion of English language teaching provision to include young children in the context of the state education sector and have brought to light the challenges involved in providing universal coverage (for a general overview in the region, see Banfi, 2017). Central to these programmes, and to these challenges, is teacher education. Other concerns include the adaptation of curricular content to new contexts and the development of specific teaching materials and resources. Other factors that are involved in the implementation of early language teaching programmes, which should be considered in any analysis of their efficacy, include broader educational policies, social demand, the cost/benefit relationship and the availability of sufficient human and material resources.

Underlying many of these initiatives of expansion of early English language teaching is the existence of social expectations in certain schools or jurisdictions in the country as to the importance of English and of starting early to achieve success. Although several languages were traditionally taught in the education system (i.e. English, French, Italian and, later, Portuguese) these recent initiatives focus almost exclusively on English. The prominence of the English language when it comes to decision makers, students and parents is closely linked to the commodification of the language as analysed, for example, in Heller (2010), Cameron (2012) and Block

(2017) and is observable both in the discourse and practices surrounding early language learning. This is particularly evident in the growing sector of private schools and language institutes and academies that cater to a population that considers learning English as essential to educational or professional success. They, in turn, connect with publishers and book distributors and examination groups and international bodies, all committed to the expansion of the sector, for example, by offering new products and modalities, e.g. online learning, intensive retreats, specialised in-company courses and, of particular interest to us here, courses for ever younger learners, including babies in baby-and-mother groups.

This paper analyses the factors that influence decision-making in early English language teaching policies and their interaction within the framework of Baldauf and Kaplan (2005), focusing particularly on policies related to personnel, curriculum and materials and methodology and the challenges presented by the current situation. Following Spolsky (2014), we will also incorporate the notion of “the general ecology of language – what languages are used by government, in business, in education, and by what section of the community” (p. xv). Also, we should consider the increasingly prominent role of English society. Even though Spanish has a central role at all levels in society and is the *de facto* official language for all practical purposes, English has gradually gained space, as was predicted by Graddol (1997, p. 11) with the incorporation of its use in contexts such as business and entertainment, causing a shift in the country from the Expanding to the Outer circle of Krachur’s (1985) concentric circle models.

Sources used in the paper include policy documents, laws, curricular documents and reports, as well as various papers analysing related phenomena. The conclusions indicate policy considerations for future implementations of early English language programmes in the region.

## Beginning of Early English Language Teaching

Drawing a timeline for institutional early English language teaching in Argentina, some of the first developments appear among various immigrant communities that settled in Argentina in the first half of the nineteenth century and peak at the turn of the twentieth century. These early endeavours were intricately connected with other prominent social institutions like churches.

To illustrate this phenomenon, we can consider Irish schools, which served the families of a community which had settled in the country as farmers starting around 1830, with the largest wave taking place in the period 1850–1870 (Korol & Sábato, 1981; Di Stefano et al., 2002; Capano, 2003; O’Brien, 2017). The children of these families typically had a tutor on the farm in the early years (usually brought over from Ireland) and then went as boarders to schools in Buenos Aires at around the age of 11. Instrumental in this process was an influential figure in the community, Father Fahy, who promoted this modality and brought over from Ireland the first group of nuns, from the order of the Sisters of Mercy, in 1856. Soon enough, the



schools were expanding their educational offerings to the residents of the city, who were not necessarily members of the Irish community, thus constituting an instance of English-medium education for speakers of Spanish.

Other schools were created in connection with other churches, such as St. Andrew's Scots School founded by the Presbyterian Church in 1838 and currently the oldest known bilingual school in existence. Several more schools appear around the turn of the twentieth century, originally serving, and nurtured by, the English-speaking communities that settled in Argentina (for more on these so-called *colegios bilingües* see Banfi & Day, 2005, and Gessaghi, 2016).

In the twentieth century, this bilingual school sector underwent some profound changes. The number of schools increased significantly, well beyond that required by the now dwindling English-speaking communities. Some schools relocated following demographic changes in the city and suburbs of Buenos Aires. Some set up branches or secondary venues. Some schools that were initially run by religious groups changed hands and became civic associations; other schools were founded by private individuals. All the schools in the sector had to adapt to a population that was Spanish-speaking on intake and expected to be fully bilingual upon finishing secondary school. These schools typically teach in English from preschool (usually 2- or 3-year-olds) and deliver around half of the school curriculum and extracurricular activities in English, a situation which, as Ortega (2009) indicates, blurs the boundaries between bilingualism and second language acquisition. Many schools and students ultimately follow programmes such as the International Baccalaureate or Cambridge International Examinations, and some go on to study in English-speaking countries.

Another group of schools currently involved in the early teaching of English are those that provide some form of so-called intensive English language programme. These schools may start teaching English in preschool or first grade and typically devote more time to English than is officially mandated but do not teach content through the language and have no connection with the English-speaking tradition. Students often sit for external international examinations, such as those of Cambridge English, including those for young learners, although precise data are scarce in the public domain.

The schools described so far exist within the private education sector. This sector accounts for approximately 30% of school-age children in the country and 50% in the city of Buenos Aires and suburbs<sup>1</sup> according to data from the Argentine Ministry of Education (*Anuarios Estadísticos en base a Relevamientos Anuales, Annual Statistical Surveys*) (2018).

Even though this development within the private school sector preceded the establishment of the formal state education system, this does not imply that national education policies, when implemented, disregarded the area of language and

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<sup>1</sup>Many of the developments described here focus on or are initiated in the city of Buenos Aires. This is not because we disregard developments elsewhere but rather because it reflects the demographics of the country – a third of the population lives in Buenos Aires and its suburbs – and the prominent role of the capital when it comes to leading innovation both now and in the past.

language education. The Argentine education system was officially founded under Law 1420 in 1884. It produced a strong system of state-run, compulsory, lay basic education. One of its central aims was to assimilate an ever-growing immigrant population. For this reason, the Spanish language was established as a medium of instruction, and the native languages of students, if not Spanish, were marginalised or suppressed. Foreign languages would only be taught in secondary schools initially.

Foreign language teachers began to be trained as early as 1904 in an institution specifically created for that purpose, the *Instituto Nacional Superior del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas* (currently known as *Instituto de Enseñanza Superior en Lenguas Vivas* “*Juan Ramón Fernández*” and popularly known as “*Lenguas Vivas*”). The *Lenguas Vivas* comprised not only a teacher training programme but incorporated a primary and a secondary school which functioned as on-site “laboratories” where future teachers would do their teaching practice and new pedagogical approaches would be tested. Initially, they followed the precepts of the direct method, which was considered very avant garde, and would subsequently be early adopters of methodological innovations such the communicative approach, making the institution a national leader in the field. Above all, the *Lenguas Vivas* was distinctive for specialising exclusively in the education of foreign language teachers (English and French initially). Another institution involved in the education of language teachers (and other disciplines) at this time was the *Instituto Nacional del Profesorado* “*Dr. Joaquín V. González*”. The model of the *Lenguas Vivas* (i.e. a school that started language tuition, English or French, at the beginning of primary school) was adopted over the following decades by a small number of state primary schools at a time when ordinary primary schools did not have any language tuition. This was, for example, the case of the *Escuela Normal Superior en Lenguas Vivas* “*John F. Kennedy*” (founded in 1957 and later renamed “*Sofía Broquen de Spangenberg*” and popularly known as the “*Lengüitas*” or “little *Lenguas*”).

The first significant expansion of early foreign language instruction came in the 1970s when the state primary schools of the city of Buenos Aires incorporated foreign language tuition from the fourth grade. This marked a departure from previous experience in early language teaching, not simply because of the numbers of students involved and the ultimate universal coverage attained, but, above all, because foreign language tuition ceased to be the preserve of a minority with the resources to pay for it and became part of the public education system. A parallel development was the creation of a programme at the *Lenguas Vivas* to train teachers specialised in teaching in primary schools. This was a two and a half years higher education programme, equivalent to the primary school teacher training programme of the time, but focusing on foreign language instruction. The secondary school teacher programme was, and continues to be, four years long.

In 1972, the *Escuela Normal Superior en Lenguas Vivas* “*John F. Kennedy*” created an innovative three and a half years programme that would qualify them as English and primary school teachers, a combined teaching qualification. These were much-sought-after graduates, particularly by bilingual schools who wanted teachers

to teach primary school content in English. However, the programme was discontinued and replaced in 2003 by an English teacher programme.

These examples illustrate that teacher education programmes were created in response to a demand for teachers generated by an expansion in the school sector. However, given that the demand for teachers increased in many different sectors (e.g. private schools, language institutes, in-company tuition), many of the teachers educated in these programmes did not necessarily end up teaching in schools. This trend intensified over time and led to competition among the different sectors to fill teaching positions. Hand in hand with the growth in the formal education system we observe an expansion in extracurricular provisions, both in state-funded and private institutions. For example, within the state-funded sphere, language centres were created (*Centros Educativos Complementarios de Idiomas Extranjeros*) in the city of Buenos Aires, where children and teenagers attend classes, to reinforce the language learnt at school or learn a new language.

Within the private sector, many private English language schools, including some networks, grew during this period (for a similar development in French, Italian and German, see Bein, 2012). One example is *Asociación Argentina de Cultura Inglesa* (AACI), an organisation founded in 1927 devoted to the teaching of English language and culture, which, from the outset, taught English to young learners from the age of seven (Ottino, 2003). In the early 1990s, AACI started offering courses to younger learners (5- and 6-year-olds) in response to market demand. At present, they offer children's courses starting from the age of 4. AACI not only delivers courses directly but certifies the work done by other language schools and private teachers around the country by means of yearly examinations, which they administer. As mentioned earlier, the second half of the twentieth century was marked by the expansion of all English language provision in all sectors of the education system and particularly in the earlier years of schooling with more institutions teaching more and younger children over time. For greater analysis of these developments, see Banfi (2010).

This complex network of institutions and diversified provision makes for a sophisticated ecosystem of English language teaching where many different stakeholders play a role, among whom we can include government, the school system, the educational market sector, commercial providers of resources (publishers, examination groups, and technology providers), professional teacher associations and international organisations. This situation has led to intensified demand for teachers for newly created positions and a consequent tug between different sectors that seek to attract English language teachers to cover more and more positions. Teachers, who are at the centre of the teaching programmes, often work in several sub-sectors simultaneously (e.g. at several schools, several levels, schools in different sectors), which can be viewed as a form of cross-pollination, as will be seen later on.

These developments both reflect and respond to cultural imperatives linked to language learning which make Argentina unique in the region. There is a shared perception in Argentine society that learning a language, particularly English, is not only a fundamental part of a comprehensive education but also an opening to clear

professional and educational opportunities. There is also a widespread perception that the sooner children start learning, the better the results. It is unsurprising, in this context, that more commercially agile organisations in the private sector (e.g. private schools and language centres) have been among the first and most extensive providers of preschool foreign language education.

## Recent Developments

In the last two decades a second wave of expansion has been observed in early English language provision, which can be described as multidirectional and multi-form. The provision of English language teaching has expanded, as indicated earlier, sometimes to the detriment of other languages, which have often been replaced or relegated to the status of a second additional language. The pre-eminence of English, even in contexts with a tradition of teaching other languages, can be explained by a confluence of the widespread perception of the importance of this language on the global stage and the more structured influence of neoliberal (educational) policies (e.g. Bernstein et al., 2015).

At the start of the twenty-first century, most schools that provided English tuition, i.e. bilingual schools, or schools with intensive language programmes had already lowered the starting age to 3 (or even 2) years old. Also, language centres or institutes expanded their offering of courses to children in this age group. The early-start emphasis has also gained traction in the state school system. In 2009 all primary state schools in Buenos Aires lowered the starting age of foreign language learning to the first grade and increased the total number of hours in primary level provision. This posed novel challenges as new sectors of the population, hitherto excluded from these curricular opportunities, were now reached, and universal coverage was achieved. Subsequently, demand increased for qualified teachers who had to be both willing and able to work with very young children. Also, from 2015, some pilot experiences were implemented in a small number of state preschools (nineteen schools with English, one with French, one with Italian), but data are scarce and anecdotal on this development.

Another form of expansion is visible in the diversification of modalities and exemplified by the 26 so-called plurilingual schools programme implemented in the city of Buenos Aires since 1999. These schools provide intensive language teaching: eight periods a week instead of five for a first language, which can be English (half the schools), French, Italian or Portuguese, depending on the school, and the incorporation of a second additional language (English if the first additional language is a Romance language, and a Romance language if it is English, which means ultimately all children learn English). The programme emphasises the integrated work with Spanish, the children's mother tongue. For some early analysis of this modality, see Padawer et al. (2007).

Given the extent of early language provision in the state school sector, and partly in an effort to differentiate themselves from this basic and now universal provision,

private schools have also expanded their offerings, adding hours to their existing English language tuition. There has also been an increase in the diversification of modalities within this sector, which includes the teaching of content through the language, the intensification of language offerings and the introduction of a second additional language (for some examples, see Banfi et al., 2016). This increase cuts across school types, including those that have confessional programmes and those that are related to a particular minority community and have some form of heritage language provision (e.g. with Hebrew, Armenian or another language, see Banfi, 2018a). In most of these cases the provision starts in preschool and consists of general English programmes that often include international examinations.

Such growth and diversification of early language teaching justified and, at the same time, required further development of teacher education programmes that contemplated this reality. In 2007, with *Resolución 24/07*, the *Consejo Federal* (the body comprising all the provincial ministers of education of Argentina) approved a single teacher education qualification enabling language teachers to teach at all levels, including preschools and primary schools. The intent of this modification was to unify and simplify teaching qualifications and to have a single umbrella option for language teachers that could then work at different levels within the education system. However, it does not solve the problem of teacher scarcity to cover the positions available and, in some way, intensifies it. Many programmes have an expanded curriculum, and consequently, student teachers take longer to graduate. For an overview of English language teacher education programmes in the region, see Banfi, (2018b).

Another programme that prepares preschool teachers to teach in a foreign language is a specialisation option in the traditional preschool teacher education programme at the *Instituto Superior del Profesorado de Educación Inicial “Sarah C. de Eccleston”*. This institution has been training teachers for the preschool level since 1937. In 2010 the programme introduced specialisation options, including one called “Foreign Language – English”; this programme consists of four workshops which students take towards the end of their course of studies and which provide an introduction to teaching English to very young learners. We include this because it represents an interesting model despite its limited numerical impact.

Parallel to and quite separately from these developments, new modalities of early English language teaching have emerged in the region, beyond Buenos Aires and Argentina, also in response to increasing social demand and the growing prominence of English language provision in the educational policy agenda. Prominent among these is *Ceibal en Inglés*, a technology-mediated programme gradually implemented throughout Uruguay starting in 2012 and providing English language tuition to children in the last 3 years of primary school, i.e. 10- to 12-year-olds (for an introduction see *Plan Ceibal*, 2017). This programme relies on videoconferencing with an English-language teacher once a week and two modules of scripted provision with a classroom teacher whose level of English is developed as part of the programme itself. This innovative programme enabled the rapid and widespread delivery of English tuition; however, its sustainability can only be guaranteed if the long-term supply of English teachers can be ensured. Despite being a project in

Uruguay, this development has provided another employment opportunity for Argentine teachers as many of the teachers working for *Ceibal en Inglés* are based in Argentina, particularly in Buenos Aires, placing a further burden on an already strained ecosystem.

## Challenges and Possibilities

Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003) and Baldauf and Kaplan (2005) present the following dimensions of analysis for instances of language-in-education programmes that we will apply here:

- access – policies regarding which languages are to be studied and the levels of education at which they will be studied;
- personnel – policies regarding recruitment, professional learning, and standards;
- curriculum and community – policies regarding what will be taught and how the teaching will be organised, including the specification of outcomes and assessment instruments;
- methods and materials – policies regarding prescriptions of methodology and set texts for language study;
- resourcing – policies regarding the level of funding for languages in the education system;
- evaluation – policies regarding how the impact of language-in-education policy will be measured and how the effectiveness of policy implementation will be gauged.

We will attempt to cover these aspects of the provision of early English language teaching in Argentina.

Regarding access, choices are conditioned by long-standing tradition. Languages taught now were defined throughout the twentieth century in light of the power relations between Argentina and other countries. We can estimate that up to 95% of the early language tuition across sub-systems and sectors is for English, with a smaller representation of languages like French, Italian and Portuguese (Bein, 2012). Generally, the issue of language choice for individual students is defined by their choice of school, with certain schools teaching certain languages, offering certain programmes, or even lottery systems where children in a school will be assigned to the English or French or Italian classes depending on the results of the draw. This kind of “imposed” choice is limited to a few state schools. In the private sector, the parents “buy into” the programme offered by the school from the outset.

Access to data to inform choices is also an issue. Middle-class families with economic resources and social capital have more privileged access to information about options for language provision, including extracurricular ones. This is clearly illustrated by the pilot experience of language tuition in preschool in the city of Buenos Aires, where the information about which schools run this programme is not publicly available. Even at the primary school level, information about which school



teaches which language is not available in the searchable database of schools (see *Buscador de Establecimientos Escolares* on the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires website). For private schools, on the other hand, the language provision modality is a central component of the marketing strategy of each institution, and they tend to highlight what they provide in terms of language tuition to compete with market rivals. In many cases, language teaching policies have been part and parcel of broader educational policies rather than discrete entities that deal with languages or the early years specifically. This was the case with the broad educational reforms of 1992 and 2006. The City of Buenos Aires, however, has developed, over the last two decades, policy instruments and projects that do deal with languages in particular.

Also influencing the language teaching landscape is what can be described as a *laissez-faire* policy approach. This has allowed (and encouraged) the development of a language sector involved in language teaching spanning the traditional bilingual education sector to the language schools, institutes or academies that have proliferated and are emblematic of the growing commodification of the English language. Curricular guidelines, where they exist, have often followed rather than preceded specific teaching initiatives. For example, the City of Buenos Aires's Foreign Language Curricular Design dates from 2001, and its subsequent modification for secondary schools is from 2013 (MEGCABA, 2001, 2013). This leads to a disconnect between the curriculum and teaching practices, with teachers often being unaware of the contents of the curriculum. This space is filled by textbooks (and in certain cases external examination programmes), which have started to determine the curriculum as teachers follow the material in them. Since the process of material selection, at least in state-run schools, follows curricular guidelines, teaching practices end up adhering to the curriculum to some extent, albeit through an indirect path.

A core area of concern is that of teacher education and teacher provision. The role of teacher education and interaction, particularly in the context of language teaching and early language learning, cannot be underestimated. Curricular reforms of teacher education programmes have mainly consisted of the ad hoc addition of areas of perceived need (e.g. training to teach at another level of education or incorporating new technologies or pedagogical approaches) and increasing the number of classes, hours and years to programmes. These changes have not dealt with the need to expand opportunities for growth within the profession, its social status, and other factors such as pay and work conditions. The modern teaching profession burdens its members with obligations of social care for students at risk, working with mixed-ability groups and integrating special-needs students. These are challenges for which teachers are not prepared or encouraged to formally qualify to meet. The equation is harsh: as more is demanded of teachers, both in training and on the job, less is provided in terms of reward, both financial and professional. It is unsurprising that talented aspiring or practising teachers end up opting for other professions. This is a reality that has been demonstrated in the teaching profession in general and is exacerbated in the case of English language teachers as the range of opportunities available to them that demand less and reward more are plentiful



(see, for example, Fernández, 2018; for teacher shortage more generally, see García & Weiss, 2019).

Teacher appointment and recruitment practices diverge widely in the state and private sectors. In the former there is a structured and, some would say, excessively bureaucratic procedure prescribed by formal norms and legislation and monitored by teachers' unions with explicit steps and stages required to attain job stability or to move between schools. In the private sector, procedures are far less regulated and there is more discretion when it comes to hiring or firing teachers, with all the benefits and challenges this poses (Jaureguiberry et al., 2010).

A critical factor in early English language teaching, as in many other areas of teaching, is the impact that the material resources associated with it have in the classroom, i.e. books, digital platforms and other technology, and examination frameworks. These teaching aids can also have a considerable influence on curricular content, methodological approaches and expected outcomes. Some of the growth described in the preceding discussion has included the provision of textbooks as part of the implementation, which has had a significant impact. Sometimes it has involved the use or development of a digital platform or digital materials. In many cases the providers of these resources respond to commercial imperatives and are outside the circuit of the educational policy decision-making process.

Evaluation is perhaps the most opaque area as regards early English language teaching. Where there is some form of programme or system of evaluation implemented, the results are rarely divulged or used to aid in improving standards (Diaz Maggioli, personal communication). The norm within education systems is to focus on so-called core subject areas when it comes to evaluation (e.g. Mathematics and Language (L1)) Practices; though not without considerable controversy (e.g. Alfie, 2019), and other areas, such as language learning, tend to be overlooked. This relegates the area to a secondary position, which is contrary to the perception of families that view it as crucial to their children's education. In the private sector, external examinations often serve as a form of validation. In some cases, even the state sector employs systems of external certification, either implementing international certifications, for example in Chile or Colombia, or developing a home-grown system like the *Certificados en Lenguas Extranjeras* of the City of Buenos Aires (Banfi & Rettaroli 2009).

An area related to issues surrounding evaluation discussed earlier is the dearth of data on the nature and impact of early English language teaching programmes. This may be due to a hesitancy in the private sector to both, share information that could be construed as beneficial to commercial rivals on the one hand, and be conspicuous enough to attract unwanted government scrutiny on the other. In the case of state-run schools, this reticence should not apply, and yet again there are few data or analysis (with only a few reports such as Padawer et al. (2007), García & Macías (2014), and Porto (2016) available but with limited circulation). This lack of reliable information may also be a consequence of the low priority given to language learning in the educational policy agenda and the lack of institutions with a remit to generate knowledge in the area.

In sum, as we can see, this combination of factors and players makes for a complex ecosystem in which the different parts are interrelated and connections across sub-sectors are fluid, with individuals often participating in more than one, even simultaneously. For example, a teacher may simultaneously work in a preschool in the private sector, in a primary school in the state sector, in a bilingual secondary school or in a language school, which involves going to different institutions during a given week or even on the same day. This can be said to constitute a form of cross-pollination, which is in some ways a strength, though in other ways a weakness.

Cross-pollination in the natural sciences is the combination of genetic material to create new varieties. It relies on the existence of pollinators, e.g. bees, that travel from plant to plant carrying genetic material (in this case pollen). On the one hand, it can help increase and diversify the number of species and may yield new and unexpected fruits; on the other hand, it may have a negative effect on the quality of the product obtained. Applying this metaphor to the education sector and the practice of multiple places of employment across institutions, language teachers are the pollinators. Going from one institution to the next, they bring news and fresh ideas to invigorate a teaching climate that may be stagnant in each separate workplace. Conversely, the practice of hopping around institutions may exhaust teachers, and, given the reduced opportunity for interaction with colleagues, the practice may have negative results, such as teacher burnout. Although multi-institutional employment is well documented, its impact on teaching practice in language teaching has not received much attention and could be a fruitful area of research. Multi-institution employment of language teachers, particularly in the state education sector, has ideological roots and implications and weakens the cohesion of staff in schools. Language teachers are doubly hit by this modality as the number of hours they have per class are fewer than those of other teaching staff and they are more likely to be employed in several schools, levels of the education system, and even sectors, thus fragmenting their ties with their colleagues and institutions even further. Although individuals sometimes strive to consolidate their workload in one institution, others view it as a liberating approach that affords them more opportunities.

The outcome of this panorama is a dearth of qualified teachers to cover the positions available. To counter these trends, several measures could be taken. Teacher education programmes should have intermediate steps that qualify individuals to start working as teaching assistants, for example, to facilitate their entrance into the formal education system as soon as possible and to develop their skills beyond basic teacher qualification. It should be said that individuals do currently start working within the system, before formally qualifying, by means of an emergency measure (a test called *prueba de idoneidad*). However, this often reduces, rather than facilitates, the likelihood of the completion of studies. The benefits of immediate income often overwhelm considerations of longer-term investment of time and resources for student teachers. This situation would be different if experience on the job were recognised through some form of accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) as part of a subsequent qualification, a further incentive to stay employed within the formal education sector. Positions as mentors, cycle coordinators and other intermediate posts should be created to provide options for more experienced

teachers to be able to grow within the system. Incentives should be provided to those with partially completed qualifications, or other qualifications with partial overlaps, such as translators, to undertake a conversion programme to develop teaching expertise. These changes would be linked to a more dynamic view of professional development that should provide realistic pathways for teacher development and specialisation.

All of these teacher education and job placement measures should be combined with a more radical overhaul of the curriculum and the variety of forms of delivery of English language tuition that take into account the needs of young learners. New forms of delivery should consider the realities of different educational contexts and avoid the forms adopted in second language contexts or those of privileged teaching environments as their only model. For example, it may not be relevant to many students to learn how to ask for something in a shop in an English-speaking country, but they will likely need to decode the language they come across online and develop skills to deal with the unknown and unexpected. If expansion of language provision is to be consolidated in all state schools, thereby guaranteeing universal provision, new forms need to be considered. Among these, some key factors and possibilities include working collaboratively with the Spanish (L1) teacher, even in those situations where this teacher does not actually speak English; developing learning materials that can be used autonomously even by very young children (on English language learning and gaming in young learners, see Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014) or with guidance and supervision from someone without knowledge of English; making connections with the linguistic reality of students and the wider context, particularly in the presence of indigenous or other first or other languages in the environment. Needless to say, while the outcomes of these new modalities of delivery will be different from those of more traditional or imported modalities, they should meet the needs of tomorrow's teachers more effectively.

Finally, forms of evaluation, both of outcomes and programme implementation, must be developed to capture the specific nature of the context in question. These forms must consider what constitutes evidence of learning, both in terms of language development and of metalinguistic awareness, cultural awareness and general communicative development. In this sense, realistic targets need to be clear in the minds of all participants involved, which will at least require fluid channels of communication between teachers/schools and parents.

## Conclusion

From this complex scenario certain conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, interest in English language learning will not wane anytime soon. Secondly, the complexity of the ecosystem is likely to increase. Demands placed on an already overstretched traditional system will grow, and they will most likely be met with new and original forms of delivery, probably home-grown, perhaps not yet devised. What follows is a discussion of some of the forms these changes could take.

The outlook of early English language learning needs to shift from the purely instrumental (e.g. as opening future job or academic opportunities) and focus on the developmental, cognitive possibilities of language learning. While it is true that machine translation may improve greatly to the point of making instrumental motivation redundant, learning a language is essentially good for us, as research into cognitive benefits for young and old has long demonstrated (see Woll & Wei, 2019, for a review). Communicating realistic expectations as well as achievable goals for language proficiency is an essential component of the innovations pushing early English language provision. If targets are unrealistic, failure will diminish motivation.

The future of language learning is inherent in the future of education in general. Many demands for reform in education (e.g. focusing on twenty-first-century abilities, interpersonal skills) apply to language, especially where the interpersonal and the relational is so crucial: children never learn their first language without interaction, and people in general have great difficulty learning an additional language without interaction. Teachers are central to this process, but their role has transformed and will continue to do so, so their education should also change to fit the new reality. A key challenge in the case of Argentina is the development of a healthier ecosystem for early English language teaching with more interconnections among the actors involved and improved understanding of how it really works. As Klett (2005) points out, this will not happen until the area is sufficiently prioritised in the research agendas of higher education institutions.

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# Chapter 9

## Early Arabic Language Learning Policies and Practices in Israel: Historical and Political Factors



Ruwaida Abu Rass

**Abstract** This chapter sheds light on the development of Arabic language learning policies in Israel in the twenty-first century, which have been affected and shaped by historical and political factors. While providing an overview of the development of historical events, the chapter shows how the implications of these policies and historical events affected the contemporary early Arabic language policies in terms of the status of Arabic as a native language of 20% of the population in Israel and a second language to Hebrew speakers, the majority population. The chapter further describes the implementation of these policies, including the practices in Arabic and Jewish elementary schools in Israel, highlighting the differences in implementing these policies for native and nonnative speakers. It includes curriculum development, materials, testing, evaluation, and recruiting teachers. The chapter ends with a conclusion and some recommendations for changing the Arabic language policies as a first language for Arabs in Israel and as a second language for Hebrew speakers.

**Keywords** Early language learning · Arabic · Language policy · Israel

### Introduction

Inheriting the British Mandate policy in Palestine, Arabic and Hebrew continued to have their statuses as official languages in Israel following the establishment of Israel in Palestine in 1948. Arabs were the majority and became a minority, and Jews as a minority became the majority. As a result, “Hebrew was placed on top, leaving Arabic at the bottom by default” (Bloomer, 2016, p. 3). Despite its status as an official language, Arabic, in practice, has a secondary role (Hareal-Shalev, 2005),

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a low status, as described by Bowen (2011), or even an inferior position (Amara, 2013; Bavardi, 2013).

Aside from Hebrew and Arabic, English and Russian are widely used in Israel. Other languages such as Amharic and Yiddish are spoken only in their local communities. Despite the fact that English is no longer considered an official language in Israel, it enjoys a special status due to its position as an international language and the native language of many Jewish immigrants who have immigrated to Israel in the last 70 years. It plays a main role in various domains, such as business, academia, media, education, and everyday interactions (Shohamy, 2014). The Russian language is widely spoken in Israel due to the massive immigration waves of Russians to Israel in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that it is not an official language, many businesses and governmental offices make sure to provide information in Russian. In addition, there is an Israeli TV channel in Russian (Moskovich, 1996).

Arabic is the main language in the Middle East, and it is the language of the Arab minority in Israel, which constitutes 20% of the total population of Israel. Arabs live in three geographical areas and are affiliated with three religions: Islam, Christianity, and Druze, which is a faction of Islam. In addition, Arabic is the heritage language of the Israeli Jews who immigrated to Israel from Arabic-speaking countries. It is important to mention that Arabs and Jews live in separate towns and villages. Even in bicultural cities, there is almost no interaction between Arabs and Jews (Dubiner, 2010).

Formal public education has never been under the control of the Palestinians (Abu-Saad & Champgane, 2006; Elboim-Dror, 2000). Instead, they have been controlled by successive colonial/external administrations (Abu-Saad & Champgane, 2006). Language policies were imposed to serve the purposes and agendas of the colonializing powers that ruled in Palestine in the last six hundred years. Since Israel utilizes a centralized system of education, language policy and planning is top-down. All policies related to language in education, such as access, personnel, curriculum, methodology and materials, resources, and evaluation, are determined by the Ministry of Education and derived from political and ideological factors, aiming to maintain Israel as a Jewish state.

As a result of this top-down policy, Arabic is the medium of instruction of all Arab schools and the four teacher training colleges in the Arabic sector. However, it is not the language of instruction at the universities. In addition, the medium of instruction of Arabic language and literature programs in Israeli universities is Hebrew (Amara, 2002). This means that Arab university students learn Arabic as a second language (L2), not a first one. Furthermore, unlike mathematics and English, Arabic is not a subject that receives a bonus on matriculation exams (Amara & Mar'i 2002).

However, Arabic is used in several official domains, such as workplaces, communications with governmental offices, and health and higher education institutions (Amara, 2002). For example, Arabic inscriptions besides Hebrew ones appear on currency, paper money, postage stamps (Amara, 2002), and voting slips (Bloomer, 2016). It can also be used in judicial proceedings and in the Israeli parliament, the

Knesset (Bloomer, 2016). In addition, Knesset members are allowed to use Arabic addressing issues and laws. Further, there is a radio program in Arabic for several hours a day and an hour of television programming daily. However, and in terms of the linguistic landscape, the street signs in most Jewish towns have Hebrew on the top and English below it, but in Arab towns, Arabic is on top and Hebrew is underneath (Bloomer, 2016).

While Arabs learn formal and informal Hebrew for communication and instrumental reasons, the majority of Jews do not consider Arabic a valuable language to learn (Amara, 2002; Bloomer, 2016). Learning Hebrew for Arabs in Israel is important to obtain services from governmental as well as private institutions and to pursue their studies in institutes of higher education (Amara, 2002).

The manifestation of Arabic language policy in Israel could be described as “a policy in service of an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ ideology, which echoes the complex conflict between Jews and Arabs within the region” (Bowen, 2011, p. 7). Uhlmann (2011) argues that the learning of Arabic by Hebrew speakers is connected to military service and security considerations, mainly in order to know the enemy. Policymakers in the Ministry of Education who have been involved in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to promote Arabic teaching have established a Joint Operations Unit, aiming to increase agents of intelligence who are specialists in Arab affairs and lives (Lustigman, 2008). As teaching a L2 is influenced largely by political, cultural and other factors (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999), the promotion of Arabic language instruction has strengthened the perception of Arabic as an “enemy language” and has made it difficult to convey a message to students of the need to learn the language for other purposes.

Second language theories could be the framework used to describe the L2 development of learners. Some scholars consider the age of learners as an important factor for L2 acquisition. This argument is related to the critical period hypothesis, which supports the claim that the younger the learner, the quicker the learning process and the better the outcomes. While some scholars consider the age factor an essential issue for L2 acquisition, others doubt such a role since other factors play roles in acquiring a L2 successfully (Abello-Contesse, 2009; Hoang-Thu, 2009). Such constant ongoing scholarly arguments leave open many questions regarding the role of age in L2 acquisition (Ortega, 2009). A number of research studies, case studies, and cross-sectional studies related to the effects of the critical period on L2 acquisition have been reviewed by Ortega (2009), who concluded that not only the biological factor matters in terms of L2 acquisition but also socioaffective factors. While the former refers to the amount of exposure to L2 and the quality of instruction, the latter concerns motivation.

In the context of this paper, the age factor is associated with the amount of exposure to the target language, as outlined in Krashen’s theory of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1998). This would emphasize the role of interaction in L2 acquisition as the basis for teaching Arabic to Jewish students, since L2 learners gain proficiency when they have access to the target language and culture by interacting with native speakers. In addition, the socioeducational model of Gardner and Lambert (1972) and the acculturation hypothesis of Schumann (1986) are relevant here to explain

the factors that affect learning a second language. Gardner and Lambert mentioned two types of motivation in L2 acquisition: integrative and instrumental. The former refers to learners who wish to integrate in the target culture, and the latter to those who seek to achieve a reward or promotion. Schumann emphasized the role of social and psychological factors in the way L2 learners acquire the target language. While social factors refer to the degree of social distance second language learners have to the target culture, psychological factors account for individuals' responses to the situations they find themselves in on their language-learning journey.

The high level of Hebrew proficiency among adult Arabs, either university students or professionals, correlates with the arguments of Krashen (1998), Gardner and Lambert (1972), and Schumann (1986). This could be explained by their instrumental motivation to succeed and to have a secure job in the Israeli market, to the high level of interaction with native speakers of Hebrew, the level of proximity, and the reduction of psychological factors. On the other hand, the low achievement of Hebrew among Arab elementary school kids and of Arabic among Jewish school pupils reflects the access policy in terms of the little amount of exposure to Hebrew and Arabic and the segregated cultures in which these pupils live. However, neither of the foregoing arguments is applicable to the case of learning Arabic by Hebrew speakers, who do not feel the need to learn Arabic due to its low status in Israel.

This chapter describes the early Arabic language policies and practices in Arabic and Jewish elementary schools in Israel, showing the differences in implementing these policies for native and nonnative speakers. While literary Arabic is developed among native speakers, only the spoken version is taught to its L2 learners. Language education curriculum policy as well as methodology and materials policy will be described showing the discrepancies between the declared objectives and practices, which have been described as unsatisfactory (Amara & Mar'i, 2002; Uhlmann, 2011). The chapter will provide an overview of the influential historical and political factors in Arabic language policies and practices in Israel. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), language planning has two levels: macro and micro. The former refers to the involvement of the government in language planning and the latter to specific issues such as providing materials and stocking libraries with books. Based on the framework of Kaplan and Baldauf (2005), I will describe both macro and micro language planning in terms of access policy, curriculum policy, methodology and materials policy, personnel policy in the recruitment and training of teachers, evaluation policy, and resourcing policy. I will provide a brief comparison between the implementation of Hebrew language policy as a mother tongue for Jewish pupils and Arabic as a first language for Arab pupils. Education in Arabic as a second language in Jewish schools will also be described. In addition, the chapter will show the failures of the implementation of Arabic language policies and practices in both cases (Arabic as a first language and a second one) and the challenges that stem from these failures. The chapter will end with a discussion of the implications of such policies for the status of Arabic in Israel and with some recommendations for adopting a new policy to address not only the educational needs of Palestinian Arabs in Israel but also political and national aspirations.

## Historical Development of Arabic Language Policy

### *Ottoman Empire: 1516–1917*

The Ottoman rule of Palestine lasted 400 years, from 1516 until 1917, which impacted the education of the native people, the Palestinian Arabs, in general and on Arabic language policy and status in particular.

The Ottomans issued the first rule regarding elementary and secondary education in Palestine in 1846 (Yousif, as cited in Amara & Mar'i, 2002). Robinson (as cited in Amara & Mar'i, 2002) mentions that in 1841 the percentage of those who were literate in Arabic did not exceed 3% of the Palestinian population. The Ottomans' language policy was to make Turkish the official language of Moslem Arabic students, and therefore it became the language of instruction at schools and governmental offices. Meanwhile the Ottomans made Arabic as the second language, a policy aimed to marginalize the native language of the local people. According to Amara and Mar'i (2002), the teaching of classical Arabic in the nineteenth century was limited, and since there was no use of Arabic, the language had very low social status. Arab politicians and intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century protested against the language policy of the Ottomans. The protest forced the Ottomans to make some policy changes (Amara & Mar'i, 2002). Arabic became an official language and the language of instruction at schools and Turkish became the second language (Al-Haj, 1996). Despite this official change, the Ottomans during their 400 years rule of Palestine succeeded in reducing Arabic to a marginalized second language, aiming to cause Arabs to lose their heritage, identity and language. The implications of such policies had a very strong impact on the Arabic language for many years even after the end of the Turkish occupation of Palestine (Gonzales, 1992).

### *The British Mandate: 1917–1948*

Arab education during the British Mandate was divided between government schools and private schools (Elboim-Dror, 2000). The majority of Muslim students attended the former and Christians and Jews the latter. Ellboim-Dror added that only 8% of Arab elementary school age children were accommodated in governmental schools at the beginning of the British Mandate in Palestine. Compared to the Ottoman period, some progress was made; however, this progress did not meet the educational needs of the Arab population in Palestine.

During the British Mandate, English, Arabic, and Hebrew became the three official languages and were treated equally in an attempt to maintain the status quo (Al-Haj, 1996). However, while Jewish and Christian schools enjoyed autonomy, Muslim schools did not.

Unlike the Ottomans, the British did not impose English as the first language in Palestine during their 30-year Mandate in Palestine, and Arabic was taught in a similar way to other Arab countries (Miller, 1985). Due to the diglossic nature of Arabic, which often causes difficulties learning it among native speakers, the number of teaching hours was increased and a variety of teaching methods was employed to help Arab students learn their language well. However, the emphasis was on religious studies and universal values as an attempt to ban Arabs from developing national aspirations (Miller, 1985). The focus was the teaching of calligraphic writing expressions and rhetoric rather than on reading books and newspapers or on writing letters (Amara & Mar'i, 2002). Therefore, it was used as an ornament to express pride in one's Arab heritage rather than an effective tool of communication.

Despite the increase in teaching hours, there was no real change in Arabic education during the British Mandate. In addition, the debate over which Arabic in the Arab world should be adopted had a negative impact on its status.

### *Contemporary Policies*

Inheriting the British Mandate policy in Palestine, Arabic retained its status as an official language in Israel following the establishment of Israel in Palestine in 1948. However, in practice, it played a secondary role (Hareal-Shalev, 2005) and had a low status, as described by Bowen (2011), or even an inferior position (Bavardi, 2013). Historical as well as political factors have affected Arabic language policy in Israel. Due to these factors, Arabic in Israel is excluded and marginalized (Amara & Mar'i, 2002; Shohamy, 2011). Hebrew is the sole official language (Saban & Amara, 2002). Uzitsky-Lazer (2013) adds that while Arabic has appeared on coins, stamps, signs, and street names, attempts have been made lately to delegitimize Arabic lately. Recently, it even has lost its status as an official language. The Jewish Nation-State Law, ratified on July 19, 2018, by a vote of 62–55 (Adalah, 2018), states, “The Arabic language has a special status in the State; arrangements regarding the use of Arabic in state institutions or vis-à-vis them will be set by law” (Hattis-Rolef, 2018).

Uhlmann (2011) states that the learning of Arabic by Hebrew speakers is connected to military service and security considerations, mainly in order to know the enemy. Policymakers in the Ministry of Education involved in the IDF have established a Joint Operations Unit aimed at increasing the “Arabist” (Arabic specialist) capacity for the Intelligence Corps (Lustigman, 2008). Military and security factors dictate Arabic language policy in Israel, which is highly affected by the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict over Palestine. Therefore, the curriculum does not include cultural content that could promote Arab nationalism. In Jewish schools, instrumental factors determine the content of the curriculum, which promotes the notion of knowing the enemy rather than appreciating their language and culture.

## Arabic Policies and Instruction in Arabic Elementary Schools

### *Access Policy*

Arabic is taught as a first language for Arab students from grades 1 to 12; however, because of negative policies and attitudes towards the Arabic language, its instruction is neither effective nor promising. In addition, Bavardi (2013) claims that it is possible to evaluate the status of Arabic through a few parameters, which describe the situation as grim and worrying. For example, the results of national and international exams in Arabic as the first language at the elementary level are dismal.

Some researchers, such as Abu Rabia & Taha (2006), have related Arabic native speakers' difficulties with written Arabic to its complex orthography. In addition, the diglossic nature of Arabic has negatively affected the status and development of Arabic in Israel (Bavardi, 2013; Saiegh-Haddad, 2007).

### *Curriculum Policy*

In developing curriculum for teaching Arabic as a native language, military and security considerations have played a prominent role. From the beginning, Israeli authorities realized the role of language education in fostering identity and nationalism. Therefore, they intentionally prepared an Arabic curriculum that would eliminate this role. Amara & Mar'i (2002) cited Benor (1951), who raised the question of how to develop Israeli Arab loyalty to Israel without compromising their identity while at the same time preventing hostile nationalism.

In addition, comparison of the objectives of the first language in Jewish schools and Arab ones shows that teaching Arabic is more technical and does not reflect an attempt at fostering linguistic and cultural understanding. In contrast, the objectives for teaching Hebrew as a first language were to promote the connection between historical events, nation building, and culture in terms of the struggles and achievements of different generations. These aspects are considered necessary to revive the history of the Jewish people and restore their identity.

Review of the literature shows that no official curriculum for teaching Arabic in Arab elementary schools was used in 1948. Different committees in different periods were established to address the issue. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed committee members, mainly Jews who arrived in Israel from neighboring Arab countries, to prepare a curriculum for teaching Arabic to Arab students in grades 1 and 2 in 1949. The curriculum was completed in 1952. The other grades continued using the old curriculum. The curriculum for grades 1–4 was completed in 1957 and for 5–8 in 1959 (Al-Haj, 1996). The objectives of such a curriculum were as follows: (1) reading correctly, understanding the written and oral language, expressing ideas and feelings clearly and logically orally and in writing; (2) understanding and evaluating good literature; and (3) opening gates to

the cultural and literary awareness in the past and present. An updated version of the curriculum was published in 1968, and it was replaced only in 1981, which also prioritized reading correctly. However, the curriculum, which was published in 1982, allowed creativity and flexibility. Similar to the old curricula, the 1982 curriculum was extensively criticized since there was a discrepancy between prescription and practice.

A committee that included Arab professionals was formed under the pedagogical secretariat in the Ministry of Education to issue a curriculum for teaching Arabic in elementary schools. This committee was divided into two teams: one for developing a curriculum for grade 1 and the second for grades 2–6. The curriculum was published in 1989. The objective for grade 1 was acquainting students with the principles of reading and writing. The objectives for grades 2 until 6 were extended and included goals of teaching students to read and write without making mistakes, to comprehend and express what they listen to and what they read orally and in writing using correct language (Ministry of Education, 1989). The curriculum for grades 2–6 was divided into three sections: literature and reading, language, and expression. The first one includes texts for reading comprehension, literary texts, and children’s literature and stories. The second one includes principles of language in terms of handwriting, dictation, differentiating between words and sentences, and being acquainted with syllables. The third emphasizes different kinds of expression, such as written, functional, and creative expression.

Another curriculum for acquainting Arab preschoolers with the basic principles of reading and writing in their native language was published in 2008, aiming to help their phonological awareness, decoding, and the basics of reading and writing (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2008). The curriculum was designed to help learners extend their lexical repertoire and develop their language, spoken as well as written. Additionally, learners are expected to understand different listening texts including children’s books and express themselves orally in different situations. However, the emphasis is on the use of correct language, and creativity is not mentioned at all. In addition, it does not include any aspects of national identification.

### ***Methodology and Materials Policy***

In the 1950s, traditional teaching methods were inherited from the British Mandate period (Amara & Mar’i, 2002). Repetition, rote learning, and memorization, which do not promote understanding and self-expression, were dominant. For many years, phonics, which emphasizes sounds and spelling, was used to develop literacy among young learners. In contrast, the language methods implemented in Jewish schools emphasized comprehension and self-expression.

As with curriculum development, there was a lack of Arabic books and resources, and the few that existed lacked any national content that could express Arab students’



national aspirations. Books from the British Mandate continue to be used, but those that included symbols for national expressions were banned in the 1950s (Amara & Mar'i, 2002). In terms of availability of materials, it was only in 1952 that books were developed for first and second graders. It took even more years to prepare books and materials for other grades, all of which were devoid of any kind of identity content.

Texts were not compatible with the objectives, which emphasized that Arab students should be proud of their language, heritage, and culture (Al-Haj, 1996). In addition, instruction hours were reduced, schools carried poorly stocked libraries, and teacher training was inadequate (Amara & Mar'i, 2002). It may be concluded that teaching was about the language, with a large emphasis on grammar.

As with teaching materials, a series of books called *Al-Raed* "الرائد" (*The Pioneer*) was published between 1990 and 2000 and accompanied by a workbook for teaching Arabic from grade 1 to 6. The book for grade 1 was published in 1999 and focuses on sounds and letters, including germination, and adding "آل التعريف" (*The*), which is used to identify nouns. The book includes short texts composed of four to five sentences. Full sentences are given, and students are expected to identify some words and letters or fill in blanks with either singular or plural forms. For handwriting practice, students are required to write out sentences. The topics address neither students' daily lives nor their immediate environment. They address general neutral issues like "taking care of animals," aimed at ensuring the absence of national and cultural content that would shape the students' identity formation.

To implement the 2009 curriculum, two series, called "العربية لغتنا" (*Arabic Our Language*), and "التكوين", in addition to other books for different grade levels, were published. Teachers, for the first time, were given the chance to choose the books they wanted to use. Examination of the *Arabic Our Language* "لغتنا العربية" series shows reveals a focus on four language skills; however, the sequence of these skills is reversed. Instead of following the natural sequence of skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, reading comes first, followed by writing and speaking. In addition, the exercises are technical, do not promote self-expression, and include tasks such as matching pictures with sentences. Moreover, they focus on just one letter each lesson.

Despite the fact that the *Al-Raed* "دئارل" The Pioneer series focuses on developing language skills, expanding the lexical repertoire of students and promoting creativity, the texts are old and do not include current subjects or topics that could instill a sense of national identity and pride. Like previous materials, they are not up to date and do not address students' feelings and experiences. In addition, the texts include nothing about students' lives. The discrepancy between the declared objectives of the Ministry of Education and the reality is obvious. These topics do instill in students pride in their language, culture, or identity. The textbooks include nothing about students' identity as Arabs and Palestinians. Furthermore, they include neither poetry nor prose of local poets and writers.

## ***Personnel Policy***

Teacher recruitment has not met curricular standards. After 1948, there was a shortage of teachers in Arab schools since educated Palestinians either left or were deported. To meet the needs of schools, elementary-level teachers were recruited, even if they had not completed high school or undergone any training. The first 2-year teacher-training program was established in the late 1950s. In 1978, the program was extended to 3 years, and it was only in 1998 that some Arab teacher training colleges started to grant the B.Ed. degree.

Until 2009, the B.Ed. program in Early Childhood Education had included teaching first and second grade. Then the Ministry of Education decided to split the program into two parts. The first is designed to teach kids up to the age of 6, but those who are interested in teaching first and second graders must take an extra 12 hours of courses to become qualified (Ministry of Education, 2017). These 12 hours include courses related to literacy development in first and second grade as well as courses related to children's literature.

## ***Evaluation Policy***

To evaluate students' language development, the Ministry of Education administers an external test, called *Meitzav*, to assess and evaluate the performance of students in different subjects, including Arabic as mother tongue. One-third of the students in second and fifth grades in primary schools take these tests. It has different components, such as reading comprehension, written expression, and linguistic knowledge.

The Ministry of Education and Culture releases the results of the *Meitzav* "فاس تي م" (Evaluation Tests) exams in a special report. The last one was released in November 2017, which includes the total scores and their explanation. It also includes a qualitative interpretation of other results; however, the report does not include the scores for different components of the exams and their distributions. The results of the *Meitzav* "فاس تي م" (Evaluation Tests) examinations in Arabic for fifth graders from 2008 to 2017 show that "in 2008, the average of Arabic-speaking pupils was 500, which is considered low. Only in 2011, the average was 571. Similarly, in 2016, it reached 573 and 2017; it increased to 592, which was considered moderate in these three years" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 11).

Table 9.1 includes the results of the Arabic exam for fifth graders in the last 3 years. It consists of different sections, such as reading comprehension, writing, and linguistic knowledge. The reading comprehension part includes two genres, narrative and theoretical, and is divided into three different components: (1) understanding the explicit meaning, (2) understanding the implicit meaning, and (3) interpretation, application, and evaluation.

**Table 9.1** Results of Arab students on Arabic national exam for three consecutive years

	2015		2016		2017	
No. of examinees	8555		9513		8825	
Percentages	%	<b>SD</b>	%	<b>SD</b>	%	<b>SD</b>
Percentage of examinees	92%		92%		90%	
Results						
Total average	68%	18	64%	19	65%	18
I. Reading comprehension (RC)	69%	18	65%	20	68%	19
I.a. RC: Narrative text	65%	22	68%	21	75%	23
I.b. RC: Theoretical text	73%	19	61%	23	65%	22
II. RC: Variables of understanding						
II.a. Understanding explicit meaning in text	84%	19	76%	20	75%	23
II.b. Understanding implicit meaning in text	74%	21	63%	24	67%	22
III. RC: Interpretation, application, evaluation	55%	24	59%	24	65%	21
IV. Written proficiency	61%	25	59%	24	53%	25
V. Linguistic knowledge	77%	20	70%	20	71%	21

Ministry of Education (2017)

The results presented in the table reveal a poor performance of examinees on most exam components in the 3 years. The total averages range from 64% to 68%. The highest average, 68%, was recorded in 2015; in the following year it decreased to 64% and then increased by 1 point in 2017. In addition, the standard deviation was very high on all exam components.

The results of the two components of the reading comprehension part show that the students did better in terms of understanding the explicit meaning of the text more than the implicit meaning. Despite this, there was a decrease in the results of understanding the explicit meaning, starting from 84% in 2015 to 76% in 2016 and 75% in 2017. The examinees did poorly in the third component of the reading comprehension part, which is interpretation, application and evaluation, since it requires them to use higher order thinking skills. Similar results were achieved in the writing component, which shows poor writing abilities among Arab pupils who participated in the exam. The average was achieved in the linguistic knowledge part only, which does not require students to produce language in written essays, reports, or letters.

### ***Resource Policy***

Many studies of government policy with respect to Arab education in general show a low investment in Arab education. Language education is no exception. The low investment shows up in provisions of material resources, allocations of hours of instruction, the use of outdated equipment, and inadequate library resources and books compared to the Jewish sector (Abu Asbeh, 2008; Rabin, 2002). For example,

on average, Arabic is taught as a native language 4 hours a week (Amara & Mar'i, 2002). In addition, budgetary allocations for Arab education are arbitrary and do not follow any clear criteria. The average student budget for the 2015–2016 school year divided by groups shows that the average budget per student in the Arab sector is lower than the average budget per student in the Jewish sector (Winiger, 2018). For example, the average budget of an elementary Jewish school student from a low economic status is NIS 26,740 and the Arab counterpart is NIS 17,176. It is important to mention that more money has been allocated in recent years to bridge the gap between Arab education and Jewish education in Israel; however, the gap remains wide.

## **Policy on Teaching Arabic as a Second Language in Elementary Hebrew Schools**

### *Access Policy*

The argument over teaching Arabic in Hebrew schools goes back to the period of the British Mandate (Fragman, 2013) or even the Ottomans period (Elizer-Halevy, 2009), and so there has never been a clear policy in this regard since 1948. Despite the fact that until recently it was an official language, Arabic is not a compulsory subject in schools. The discussion continues to this day, and it is raised from time to time either by politicians who emphasize the need to learn Arabic out of national security concerns or linguists who see the advantage of learning a second language and being acquainted with its associated culture.

Since Arabic varies from one Arab country to another, the discussion extends to which of the variants of spoken Arabic should be taught. Efforts were made by the Ministry of Education to make Arabic instruction a compulsory subject in Jewish schools, but this still has not been implemented on a large scale (Donitsa-Schmidt et al., 2004). It stems from the negative attitudes towards the language and its speakers by the pupils and their parents. Therefore, most of the learners demonstrate a low level of proficiency in Arabic, and barely 2% of them choose to study it in higher grades (Donitsa-Schmidt et al., 2004). Uhlmann (2011) describes Arabic education in Jewish schools as “unsatisfactory by both objective and subjective measures” (97).

Several studies have been conducted to investigate issues related to Arabic instruction in Jewish schools. For instance, Donitsa-Schmidt et al. (2004) and Dubiner (2010) examined whether the teaching of spoken Arabic as a second language in Hebrew elementary schools affects learners' attitudes toward the Arabic language, native speakers of Arabic, and their culture. The results showed more positive attitudes toward the Arabic language, Arabic speakers, and their culture from those students who study Arabic compared with those who do not.

## ***Curriculum Policy***

The first curriculum for teaching Arabic in junior and high schools was published in 1995. Before that, the Ministry of Education and Culture had issued some recommendations for teaching Arabic in Jewish schools. With more voices to update the 1995 curriculum, a new curriculum for teaching Arabic to elementary school students was published in 2000.

The most updated curriculum, published in 2009, has the following objectives for teaching Arabic in elementary schools from grade 4 to 6: (1) enable learners to converse in Arabic, (2) acquire an affinity for the language, (3) stimulate students' motivation to expand and improve their knowledge, (4) expose students to Arab culture, and (5) encourage tolerance and enable students to communicate with Arabic speakers in Israel and abroad (Ministry of Education, 2009). It was recommended that the study of spoken Arabic would be done with Hebrew transliteration.

## ***Methodology and Materials Policy***

For instrumental and practical reasons, only spoken Arabic is taught in Hebrew schools. The aim here is to expose learners to the Arabic used in everyday situations. Following, partially, the communicative approach, only listening and speaking skills are practiced in Arabic classes for Jewish students. Regarding the materials policy, many researchers and scholars assert that there is a lack of materials for teaching Arabic. For instance, Hayam-Yonas and Malka (2006) find that the majority of Arabic teachers in Jewish schools desire updated materials. Approximately 76.1% of them see the need for updating the oral proficiency books and 62.7% for listening comprehension. In addition, two-thirds collect supplementary materials to expose students to Arab culture. Similar results were found among high school Arabic teachers. The researchers summarize by saying that the choice of materials remains limited and does not meet the requirements for teaching Arabic effectively. As a result, they prepare materials by themselves. In addition, the medium of instruction is usually Hebrew because the majority of teachers do not have the ability to speak Arabic fluently and accurately.

Elizer-Halevy (2009) analyzed several books used for Arabic instruction in Hebrew schools in different periods of time, from the late 1950s to the 1980s. In terms of teaching spoken Arabic in elementary schools, the texts are limited to greetings and everyday short conversations, such as "My name is Dana," "I live in Tel Aviv," and "How are you?" (p. 7). She added that the learners used Hebrew translations to learn these expressions.

Since Arabic instruction is greatly influenced by the political situation in Israel, more materials became available for literacy development after signing the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel (Or, 2011). These materials were developed by

private initiatives, but they did not reach a large pool of students. In 1995, following the Oslo Peace Accords, a new detailed curriculum was developed that included language and culture. It was recommended grammar be taught through context; however, grammar was emphasized more than communicative aspects of the language (Poole, 2005). It may be concluded that in the 1990s, several attempts were made to make Arabic instruction an enjoyable experience using a variety of teaching methods and integrating cultural aspects. However, all of these projects were neglected and the books were excluded from the list of books offered by the Ministry of Education (Or, 2011).

In contrast, the materials that have been developed by Abraham Fund called *Ya Salam*, which considers language as a bridge to culture, are based on contemporary theories and practices for teaching second languages (Or, 2011). Therefore, a variety of materials are available, including books, dialogues, songs, plays and movies. The learners are also exposed to life experiences of their Arab peers.

### ***Personnel Policy***

Teacher recruitment is another issue that should be addressed because nonnative speakers teach Arabic in Jewish schools, and these teachers usually are not proficient enough to teach the language (Hayam-Yonas & Malka, 2006; Uhlmann, 2010, 2011), and graduates of Arabic departments in the universities and colleges are not competent and proficient enough in Arabic (Or, 2011). Uhlmann (2011) claims that their “mastery of colloquial Arabic is poorer than their proficiency in Standard Arabic” because of the physical segregation and the lack of interaction between the two communities (p. 101). Unlike the common trend in recruiting native speakers to teach a second language, no serious efforts have been made to recruit Arab teachers to teach Arabic in Hebrew schools. However, in the 1980s, some attempts were made to integrate Arab teachers in Hebrew schools to teach Arabic, but in most cases, these attempts were not successful (Fragman, 2013). As cited in Fragman (2013), Brosh (1995) attributes the failing experiences to the cultural differences between Arabs and Jews in Israel.

As a result, the number of Arab teachers teaching Arabic in the Jewish sector is very small. According to Fragman (2013), until 2005 the number did not exceed 5% of the 1400 teachers of Arabic. Currently, about 10% of these teachers are natives of Arab countries. In 2005, private foundations, such as the Abraham Fund, cooperated with the Ministry of Education to fund the training of native teachers to teach spoken Arabic in Jewish schools. At the outset, Arab teachers receive training to teach in 20 elementary schools in the Haifa region. Then, other schools gradually followed, and now 100 elementary schools around the country teach spoken Arabic 2 hours a week (Fragman, 2013), aiming to reach the goal of teaching Arabic to 10% of all Jewish elementary school children.

Furthermore, recruiting Arab teachers, and mainly Muslim female ones, especially those who cover their heads, to teach Arabic in Jewish Israeli schools poses a

significant challenge. This is especially so during periods of tension because pupils and their parents perceive these teachers as being associated with political religious groups who oppose Israel. Arab teachers in general and veiled female teachers in particular find themselves coping again with stereotypes or even hostility directed at them from either students or their parents. Despite the misunderstandings or discomfort at the beginning of their recruitment, their interaction with other teachers, principals, students, and their parents have led to cooperation and understanding (Fragman, 2013). Still, dealing with holidays and ceremonies is not easy, especially celebrating Independence Day and singing the national anthem, *Hatikva* “*لمآلآ تي نغ*” (The hope).

### ***Evaluation Policy***

Unlike evaluating Hebrew or Arabic as a mother tongue, no national tests are administered to evaluate the performance of Jewish learners of Arabic as a second language. Arabic teachers in schools usually work cooperatively to develop their own oral exams that focus on interpersonal communication.

### ***Resource Policy***

Similarly, a resource policy is required to guarantee the availability and adequacy of books and materials and enough hours of instruction for teaching Arabic as a second language to Hebrew speakers.

### ***Implications and Conclusion***

The political and sociocultural factors in Israel have caused a dramatic change in the status of Arabic. From a language having an official status stipulated by the British Mandate in Palestine, Arabic has become a marginalized and inferior language under the current Israeli government. The government has placed little emphasis on Arabic because it considers the state Jewish and democratic and it aims to preserve the dominance of Hebrew. In addition, the continuous Palestinian-Israeli conflict and security considerations have contributed to the low status of Arabic. Such a low status is reflected in Arabic language instruction as a mother tongue to Arab students and as a second one to Hebrew speakers. From the outset, political and security factors dictated policy with the aim of keeping Arabs loyal to the young state and disconnected from Arab nationalism by focusing on technical linguistic issues rather than meaning-based content.



Based on the foregoing discussion, there is a need to adopt a new policy, one that is based on the framework of Ruiz (1984), which considers language as a right, a problem, and a resource. Language as a right encompasses the freedom of people to speak in their heritage language and to preserve it. In the context of this paper, language is a problem when it is the language of a minority group or a racial group. Therefore, the new policy of teaching Arabic as a native language should be based on the framework to pursue educational principles rather than follow military and security considerations. It should aim to show respect for the Arabic language, population, and culture while striving to empower its speakers. There is a need for a policy shift from segregation to inclusion in order to achieve social stability and cohesion in Israel, allowing more interaction between Arabs and Jews to foster reconciliation between them in Israeli society and promote peace in the Middle East. Thus, a new access policy for teaching Arabic to Jewish elementary school children is required to make Arabic instruction in elementary Jewish schools a mandatory subject. It should be considered as a resource or an asset rather than the language of the enemy.

To meet the national aspirations and pedagogical needs of Arab students, a team of Arab professionals and Arabic language instructors should be given the autonomy to develop a new curriculum policy for teaching Arabic and promote its culture. To implement the new curriculum, the methodology and materials policy should focus on understanding, self-expression, and creativity rather than technical aspects of the language. The policy on materials should reflect educational values in terms of showing respect for the Arabic language, speakers of Arabic, and their culture. In terms of methodology, the communicative approach should be fully adopted and the four language skills, not just spoken Arabic, being taught. In addition, the pedagogy for teaching Arabic should be based on theories of second language acquisition to develop the linguistic and communicative competence and performance of Jewish learners. The age of learners should also be considered as a factor in learning Arabic successfully. Ample opportunities for language learning and good quality of instruction should be emphasized. This could be accomplished by increasing the amount of exposure to Arabic and encouraging access to Arab communities in Israel to increase opportunities for interaction between Jewish children and their Arab peers. In addition, a new evaluation policy for teaching Arabic as a native language is required to evaluate students' abilities in using the language and producing it. Regarding teaching Arabic in Jewish schools, an evaluation policy is required since it has never existed. It should evaluate learners' use of the language and their acquaintance with Arab culture.

Most importantly, a new personnel policy should be developed. The objectives of the new policy should focus on training and recruiting well-qualified teachers who have a high level of language mastery and pedagogy. Qualified teachers of Arabic need to be trained with respect to knowledge and pedagogy. Second language researchers and educators should take a leading role in designing the new personnel policy and implementing it consistently. The policy on teacher training should be based on theories of second language acquisition and research results in this field,

along with the needs of young learners. The goal should be to foster social cohesion and reconciliation in Israeli society.

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## Chapter 10

# Where Have Personnel Policies on Early English Language Learning Taken Us in Mexico So Far?



Laura García-Landa

**Abstract** In recent decades, early language school policies have proliferated in Mexico as a result of international education policies related to modernization and globalization. But these policies have led to a series of uneven results, as documented by Mercau Appiani (*Revista Casa del Tiempo* 2(24):43–46, 2009a), Perales Escudero et al. (The English in public elementary schools program of a Mexican state: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2012.722599>, 2012), Ramírez (La enseñanza del inglés en las primarias públicas mexicanas. Pearson-Universidad de Sonora-Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, 2015), Ramírez-Romero et al. (*Intl J Qualit Stud Educ* 27(8):1020–1043, 2014), and Terborg et al. (*Curr Issues Lang Plann* 7:415–518, 2006). Those studies report systematic failures in the way educational systems are currently organized. They found that the educational systems are mainly focused on early English language learning, disregarding the socio-cultural dynamics that surrounds the relation of this language to languages different from English, as well as the shortage of proficient and qualified teachers. As structured and organized systems, early language learning policies have evolved and new relationships have been built among them, which has multiplied the complexity of planning. Following Kaplan and Baldauf's (Language-in-education policy and planning. In Hinkel E (ed) *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning*, pp 1013–1034. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005) framework of language-in-education policy goals and Cooper's (Language planning and social change. Cambridge University Press, 1989) accounting scheme for the study of language planning, I analyze the personnel policy that has been established in Mexican Basic Education for Early English Learning so far. Personnel policy seems to have become the key-stone, with respect to the teaching of languages in the Ministry of Education

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(Secretariat sounded German, Plan Sectorial de Educación 2007–2012, 2007), ever since the policy of teaching English to primary school children was brought up for discussion by specialists from different universities and institutions in 2009 for its lack of systematic organization. I refer to personnel policies that have hindered workable teaching organization within the educational system to happen. Following that discussion, some possible articulation changes are suggested in regard to this policy.

**Keywords** Personnel policy · English · Early language learning · Mexico

Early English language teaching in Mexico started as an elite policy for the children of diplomats in Mexico, who could continue their studies once they returned to their home countries. This kind of elite English language teaching further expanded as cultural capital for the well-off and educated girls and boys of the Mexican bourgeoisie. This trend gave way to the spread of English within the framework of neoliberal policies in the last two centuries (Terborg et al., 2006).

Regarding Spanish, it is the de facto official language of use in most domains in Mexico, with a few exceptions for certain local events, such as festivities, religious rituals, community work activities, family interactions, game- or learning-related interactions at school, and local sales, where the language used is an indigenous language (Menken & García, 2010; Terborg & García-Landa, 2011); or international academic events such as conferences, seminars, work in research groups, writing publications, business meetings, and sales and negotiations, which are carried out in a foreign language. Although there is a strong ideological belief that English is the leading foreign language, it has been documented that the presence of other foreign languages marks a tendency toward a more plurilingual and diverse society (García-Landa, 2006; García-Landa & González Trejo, 2015; Hamel, 2013; Hamel & Carrillo, 2013; Hamel & Muñoz, 1981).

The teaching of English in public primary schools in Mexico has a more recent history, which dates back a couple of decades. In this contribution we will focus on how far personnel policies on early English language learning in Mexico have taken us so far. The analysis is based on a critical review of the literature published in different academic sources in the last 20 years related to early English language teaching. I begin by describing the Mexican context where this educational practice has taken place, followed by a brief account of the Mexican educational system. Then I define personnel policies, followed by an analysis of the literature regarding early English language teaching in Mexico, identifying certain personnel policy themes that emerge and that are central to our assessment of where we are, to explain any tension that might arise, and is outline some possible directions for further research from the perspective of complex thinking.

## A View of the Mexican Linguistic Context

Macro language policies in Mexico can be traced back to when Nahuatl was selected as a lingua franca of the court at the arrival of the Spaniards (Barriga Villanueva & Martín Butragueño, 2010) and later, when well-off indigenous children learned Latin in the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico (García-Landa, 2018; Gonzlabo Aizpuru, 2012). Further on, during the Mexican Revolution, people were Castilianized, being forced to use the Spanish language and the culture associated with it. The creation of the Ministry of Education (Secretariat of Education [SEP]) in 1921, which established the language policy of teaching Spanish and using it for learning in primary schools, further promoted this Castilianization process (also known as Hispanization). Foreign immigration brought about the foundation of bilingual schools for migrant children in order to preserve their languages and cultures. Later, these schools opened up their doors to children of the elite, who saw bilingual education as a source of prestige (Perales Escudero et al., 2012; Terborg et al., 2006).

Mexico is a multilingual and multicultural society, yet it holds an implicit monolingual language policy. In Mexico, there are 287 indigenous language varieties (Ethnologue, 2019), which makes it a highly diverse country. Article 4 of the General Law of Indigenous Peoples' Language Rights (*Ley general de derechos lingüísticos de los pueblos indígenas*), promulgated in 2003, states that both indigenous languages and Spanish, because of their historical roots in the country, are declared national languages and have equal status nationwide.

One of the first indigenous language policies was the creation of the General Direction of Indigenous Education (Dirección General de Educación Indígena, [DGEI]) in 1978, which was devoted to developing curriculum for indigenous populations, according to their needs (DGEI, 2008). A second version of this program, called Bicultural and Bilingual Indigenous Education, emerged in 1983, during Miguel de la Madrid period, based on the General Guidelines for Indigenous Education, which emerged from the associated communities. Interestingly, this proposal was mainly opposed by group teachers, who had become convinced that the policy had no advantages, so they decided to block its implementation (Muñoz, 2001; Patthey-Chavez, 1994). During the period of Salinas, Spanish was proposed to be made the official language of instruction within the program of indigenous education, recognizing differences but ignoring their importance at school and taking for granted the sociocultural reality of indigenous contexts. The Program of Educational Development, during the Zedillo period, included a section on migrant indigenous people, National Program of Agriculture Workers from the Ministry of Development (SEDESOL). Unfortunately, no concrete policies were developed under this program. Fox created the Bilingual Intercultural Education (EIB) in his PDI (Programa de Desarrollo Institucional [Programme of Institutional Development]) (from 2001 to 2006) based on a recognition of differences. In agreement with this, in 2003 the General Act of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous People was created. In this act, Chapter 11 states that all indigenous people have the right



to be taught in their own language in basic education. This apparent egalitarian policy was fraught with curiosity, since it was considered a battlefield of power, inclusion, and exclusion, rather than a space for empowering indigenous people and making them aware of their situation, enabling them to make informed decisions as citizens (see Buenabad-Martínez, 2015, p. 117; Terborg et al., 2006, pp. 454–457, for further reading).

Within the framework of this law, indigenous languages changed the *de jure* minority status they had during the Porfirian government (1976–1911) in Mexico but did not manage to attain the status of public languages in relevant domains at the *de facto* level. In 2003, the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) was created under the authority of the Ministry of Education, with some sort of autonomy to establish the language policies of indigenous languages in Mexico. A director was appointed, and resources were assigned to the new educational entity. Its objective was to promote the strengthening, preservation, and development of indigenous languages spoken in the national territory, disseminate knowledge and enjoyment of the nation's cultural riches, and advise the three orders of government to articulate the public policies needed. They developed a number of public policies, such as the Program for the Revitalization, Strengthening and Development of National Indigenous Languages 2008–2012 (PINALI) (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas [INALI], 2008) and published widely on numerous issues related to language and education; example publications include the *Catalogue of Mexican Indigenous Languages: Contemporary Cartography of its Historic Settlement* (INALI, 2009), in which are described the linguistic varieties and their distribution in the country, and *Mexico and National Indigenous Languages at Risk of Extinction* (Embriz & Zamora, 2012). The Advisory Committee for the Attention of Indigenous Languages at Risk of Extinction (CCALIRD) further documents endangered languages and defines the public policies to be followed by the government.

Another very important language status policy that may impact personnel English language policies has to do with migration. Since 2008, the Consejo Nacional de Población [CONAPO], 2008) started showing a returning flux of migrants from the US to Mexico as a result of the stringent protection policies that followed the September 11 attack in the US. But it was also due to the economic recession that left thousands unemployed in the United States (Moctezuma, 2013; Ramírez & Aguado, 2013). However, apart from the Binational Program of Migrant Education (PROBEM) that assured educational continuity for children who followed basic education studies in Mexico and the US, no other migrant project has been proposed by the Ministry of Education. Among the migration patterns observed were family migration to Mexico and child-only migration. This poses questions regarding multilingual language policies at basic levels of education (Ramírez-García & Uribe-Vargas, 2013; Rodríguez, 2013). In addition, the massive migration that started on December 2018 raises new questions on this matter (Semple, 2018). Perhaps it will be shown that some future early English language learning policies will have emerged from this complex event.

## Mexican Educational System

The Mexican educational system comprises public schools and private schools, under the macro system of the Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP]). This system integrates three subsystems: basic education, upper-middle education, and higher education. The first two subsystems are compulsory. In addition, the system offers programs for special education, early childhood education, adult education, and job training (SEPGOB, 2019).

Basic education consists of three levels, preschool (3–5 years), primary school (6–11 years), and secondary school (12–14 years). High school education comprises three subsystems: general high school (previous university studies), technical professional education (job training), and technological high school (simultaneous high school diploma and technician diploma). Higher education is also structured into two levels of undergraduate education (specialty and bachelor's degrees) and graduate education (master's and PhD), including normal (teacher training) schools (SEPGOB, 2019).

## Contemporary Mexican English Language Policies

In the last century, the status of English changed from a peripheral, functional language to a central one in the national basic education curriculum. English was included as a subject in 1926, in an age of revolutionary turmoil. Then, 42 years later, English symbolized imperialism and was taught poorly in public schools, for it was seen to be of minor importance for the development of children's general education and lives. More recently, English has come to play a central role in Mexican education, and its position in the world impacted its image before the eyes of people around the world and Mexicans. Since the 1990s, there have been at least five types of EFL programs for Mexican public primary schools: state programs, English Encyclomedia, the National English Program in Basic Education (PNIEB, by its Spanish acronym), the Program for Strengthening the Quality of Basic Education (PFCEB), and the National English Program (PRONI). However, learning English in Mexico has been described as a failure. This has to do with an ideological conflict. English is perceived as a valuable tool to possess and at the same time a sort of cultural loss or imposition (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016).

Currently, learning English is considered to be an important right (O'Donoghue, 2015). It has become so relevant that some voices have been raised regarding the quality of teaching, arguing about the relevance and meaningfulness of learning it and condemning the lack of structure, contextualization, and appropriateness of the learning process, which have prevented children from accessing real English language use, and therefore deepened inequalities between the elite bilingual programs and the public English language programs offered by the Ministry of Education (SEP, by its Spanish initials) in Mexico. From this perspective, the

proposal urges us “to learn through English” and stop saying “sorry,” to become ethical, responsible, and committed to plurilingualism, as a collective and collaborative effort to make democracy happen (O’Donoghue, 2015). In a similar vein, the Mexican Institute of Competitiveness (IMCO), through the program English for Competitiveness and Social Mobility, made a proposal for a national policy on English from the perspective of opening markets globally (Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad [IMCO], 2015). Yet, we still see that studying English per se does not necessarily ameliorate socioeconomic differences (Sayer, 2015).

The most explicit language policy regarding English was part of the Education Sector Program 2007–2012 that resulted in an integral educational reform and implied the preparation of new plans and study programs. In 2011, this strategy became the National Curriculum, in which Agreement 592 was created within the Study Plan. The agreement states

[t]hat the Plan and study programs in Basic Education must favor curriculum that fosters students’ learning in their mother tongue, whether this be Spanish or any of the indigenous languages recognized in our country; the learning of English as a second language, and the development of competence in the use of information and communication technologies, in response to the legitimate social demand in favor of pertinence, equity, and quality in Mexican public schools and the society of knowledge (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2011, pp. 3–4).

The emphasis made all through the conceptual document is on the use of language to interact with others, through Social Language Practices, that comprise linguistic and intercultural components in order to achieve B1 level, according to CEFR (SEP, 2011, p. 31).

This agreement presented the policy of including English in the curriculum for 12 successive grades, from the first year of preschool to the third year of lower secondary school, that is, from the age of 3 to 15. A series of steps was defined to carry it out: first, a diagnosis of English pilot programs conducted by a group of researchers; then the development of a set of common subjects at the state level, piloted in 2009; next, the establishment of the 2009 Study Plan that included the PNIEB; and finally, in 2011, the development of English programs and curricular standards from the third year of preschool to the ninth (SEP, 2011). In the following section we will see why this policy has become so relevant for the educational system and we will examine its origins and current state.

## Early English Language Learning in Mexico

Language education policies in Mexico have been influenced by international organisms. One of the most influential documents was by Delors (1996): *Learning: The Treasure Within* and its idea of learning the mother tongue, English, and a third language as a distinctive image of the global citizen. This idea was highly influential in the process of educational modernization. The language policy focused on

creating an intercultural dialogue. It is perceived that together with multilingualism and cultural mediation, intercultural dialogue would provide a fruitful communication flow and generate internationally favorable environments for the development of a linguistic pluralism, as well as some strategies to achieve it. One of the suggestions within that framework was to promote early language learning of a second language in both kindergarten and elementary school, which would allow students to achieve a high level of proficiency in both languages at the end of this level and perhaps use it in their undergraduate studies. A third language would be integrated at the secondary level, disregarding the fact that this level was still undergoing consolidation, and the coverage of teachers who satisfied the criteria to teach at that level was clearly far from attaining that goal.

As noted earlier, there are five types of early English language programs: state programs, English Encyclomedia, the PNIEB, the PFCEB, and the PRONI (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). The pilot English state program was an initiative of five states about two decades ago that had as its aim to provide students from public Mexican primary schools access to learning English, which would be otherwise difficult to arrange. The initiative was taken up by 13 states in the period of 2000 to 2003. By 2010, 21 states were involved in the program. These programs had a local budget that mainly came from the local states' administration and parents. The curriculum was heterogeneous in terms of methodology, teaching resources, number of schools and students involved in the program, and recruitment policies (Castañedo & Davies, 2004; Chepetla et al., 2008; Davies, 2009; SEP, 2011; for a brief and interesting account of the program from the perspective of the coordinator, see Ban, 2009).

An analysis was conducted under a team of researchers (Ramírez-Romero, 2013; Ramírez-Romero et al., 2015; Sayer, 2015a, 2015b), who pointed out the main problems perceived in the pilot stage of these programs, the recruiting and profiling of teachers, the lack of an official curriculum, the unavailability of teaching resources, the apparent unimportance of the subject, and the limited coverage of the program.

Yet, as always happens in Mexico with every 6 years, the new administration had its own proposal, the Encyclomedia. The program comprised digitalized textbooks and teaching resources by means of an electronic whiteboard, a personal computer, and a projector for each of the participants in the classroom. While the pilot program was still in operation, the program launched simultaneously in 13 states in 2003 and was piloted between 2005 and 2006. The program was intended to be exploratory since it aimed "to determine the feasibility of the program and to have students experience initial contact with the language" (p.). The program ran at a rate of two 50-minute sessions per week, covering a unit per month.

The idea was that regular group teachers could learn English together with their students in a semiautonomous fashion, with the help of a guide. Unfortunately, the proposal failed to take into account that neither teachers nor students were prepared to learn independently. Untrained group teachers faced an inability to apply the program's resources properly to either organize their class or provide any counseling to students. Moreover, the contents were not suitable for the community's

multicultural contexts (López-Gópar, 2013, 2014; López-Gópar et al., 2009; Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016).

In 2006, the Mexican educational system was evaluated through the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and from the 12 recommendations made by this organization, two of which underscored the need to develop achievement standards in areas such as reading, align the curriculum to allow progression through the different levels, and design materials that supported those initiatives. Two years later, the OECD organized the conference *Globalization and Linguistic Competencies: Responding to Diversity in Language Environments*, where English was highlighted as the lingua franca of business in Europe. The link between language competencies and economic and social flow, as well as human interrelations, became prominent: educational and work mobility, and cooperation projects. It was within this framework that the SEP came up with the idea of revamping early English language learning (Reyes, Murrieta & Hernández, 2011).

A year later, during Felipe Calderón's 6-year term, it was established that Mexican education should promote an integrated education that included language learning (Poder Ejecutivo Federal, 2007). Likewise, the Sectorial Plan of Education (SEP, 2007) emphasized the importance of values, intercultural and democratic interaction within the classroom, through the use of language.

Simultaneously, as a result of Secretarial Agreement 384 that established the new curriculum of secondary schools, an Interinstitutional Advisory Council of Foreign Languages was established in October 2007. The objective of this Council was "to permanently evaluate the operativity of the curriculum, the quality of its results, as well as determining the amendments related to the content of learning, the pedagogical orientations, the teaching strategies and school management" (SEP, 2009a, p. 4). The council was composed of specialists from five state and federal public universities—the National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Metropolitan Autonomous University, the Benemerita University of Puebla, the University of Veracruz, and the National Pedagogical University—as well as representatives from the School of Teachers (Normal Superior) from Mexico City and Atlacomulco, two diplomatic representatives from the U.S. Embassy and French Embassy, and two specialized language centers, the British Council and the Alliance Française of Mexico.

Following discussions on the secondary school English program, the council was charged with the task of issuing an opinion regarding a new English program for preschool and primary school, the PNIEB. The council expressed its opinion in relation to the main problems observed at the secondary school level. In relation to personnel policy, the main issue was that teachers did not have an adequate level of English to teach, and very few programs that provided training for teaching English to youth properly (Consejo Consultivo Interinstitucional de Lenguas Extranjeras [CCILE], 2009).

In relation to the primary school level, the council added the need to develop a National Language Policy on the teaching of English, since the objective and relevance of this project were not clear with regard to the what, what for, how, and

why of offering this subject at this level. It also endorsed the maintenance of plurilingualism as the axis of language teaching policy, which ensured the development of a plurilingual competence for Mexican children and youth at short and long terms. Moreover, it stressed the importance of establishing foreign language programs based on more up-to-date approaches, such as a student-centered and communicative intercultural competence approaches, articulating them horizontally and vertically to other subjects from the curriculum. Further, it highlighted the relevance of developing national language teaching standards in order to articulate coherently the foreign language programs from preschool, primary, and secondary education, particularly in their learning objectives; in the expected competence development; in the corresponding descriptors of language use and in the general criteria for evaluating and certifying these competencies; establishing a concrete and realistic operative plan to respond little by little to the demand of covering the teaching of English in primary schools in Mexico. The council additionally emphasized the importance that this plan be integral, in the sense that it should include supporting educational policies, as well as pedagogical orientations, methodological approaches, material, financial and didactic resources, teaching staff, and organizational and management criteria. The council made the following recommendation: "Recognizing that at the moment the number of teachers needed to cover the initiative is incomplete, we consider it necessary to circumscribe the teaching of English to sixth-grade groups and to proceed to a gradual implementation in a descending and stepped manner, in each school cycle, until the fourth level is reached. A possible schema could be: 2009-2010-2011 cycle: sixth grade; 2012-2013-2014 cycles: sixth and fifth grades; 2015-2016-2017 cycles: sixth, fifth, and fourth grades" (CCILE, 2009, p.10).

It was also suggested that a certification and revalidation process be established for teaching development and competence, aligned with national and international standards of language proficiency, intercultural competence, and pedagogical skills. The council also suggested that teacher development programs not be confined to the resources of a specific institution but that they be nurtured by interinstitutional collaborative programs, both national and international, incorporating experiences from teaching schools and universities. Another relevant issue raised by the council was to open up spaces for the community, sharing positive and negative experiences with the implementation of the program, both regional and institutional, giving place to a critical peer reflection and, therefore, to the optimization of the curricular postulates, strategies, and resources of the program. It also stressed the need to define in a precise way the functions of institutional entities that oversee the educational system in order to focus on the formative dimension of the teacher.

Special mention should be made of the assurance of fundamental validation processes with regard to technological resources that were incorporated into the teaching of foreign languages at different levels. The council expressed its concern over imposing conditions for the use of foreign languages outside of academic domains, guaranteeing students and teachers an authentic use of the language in social practices that were meaningful for the participants. Promoting systematic research in the field of language teaching and learning was encouraged, especially in relation to the needs and priorities of the discipline. In the same vein, interinstitutional interchange



programs for teacher mobility that would lead to professional enrichment and a rational use of resources within the educational system were promoted (CCILE, 2009).

Nonetheless, by 2008, the SEP, through the Subsecretary of Basic Education, implemented the Integral Reform of Basic Education (RIEB), where English was made a core transversal subject throughout the entire educational system (Subsecretaría de Educación Básica [SEB], 2008). It was stated that by the 2009–2010 cycle, the curriculum of the entire primary education system should be reformed to be aligned with the preschool and secondary levels in order to achieve transversal coherence. The curriculum reform demanded new standards of language development based on level and age, as well as the development of pedagogical strategies and general guidelines to be implemented by the different schools nationwide, according to their infrastructure (SEB, 2008). The language curriculum would allow students to integrate into a certain group, according to their level of English. Teachers could also use the Encyclomedia platform, installed in the last two levels of primary education, to teach the subject (SEB, 2008).

As a result, the PNIEB came onto the scene seeking the standardization of the previous state English language programs. This English program was inserted into the Curriculum for Basic Education Primary Level, as a component of the Language and Communication block of the national curriculum, in order to align the teaching of English with Spanish, as well as articulating the progression of the contents across preschool, primary, and secondary levels (SEP, 2010).

The PNIEB would be implemented in four cycles. The first cycle, levels one and two of primary school, focused on having students at the preschool level experience learning English at a very basic level. The main objective in this cycle was to develop social practices of language, through games, songs, and patterns of interaction. All other cycles—second cycle levels 3 and 4, third cycle levels 5 and 6, and fourth cycle levels 1–3 of secondary school, followed international language learning standards, with a focus on social practices as well. The PNIEB took a constructivist perspective, with a focus on situational learning that privileged communication rather than grammatical structures.

With the arrival of President Peña Nieto, a new name arose for what seemed to be the PNIEB, causing much uncertainty and discontent among teachers and local coordinators (Sayer, 2015), the PNIEB became the Program for the Strengthening of the Quality of Basic Education (S246 PFCEB). Its general objective was to provide support to existing programs, such as for second language study processes (English) (SEP, 2014). This change was made by the administration without notice and even without any kind of evaluation of the previous program. The administration allocated an annual budget to the program on December 28, 2019, and its approval appeared on the *Official Gazette*, published by the 706 Accord, which contains its operating rules. It came into effect on January 1, 2020.

The state would support the national program with supplementary educational materials, resources, and strategies. It would also support curriculum development, the implementation of a second language (English) in public elementary schools,



and the implementation of a funding scheme to finance local projects consistent with program objectives.

This time, the program was based on what Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016) called a “willingness policy” expressed by the institution signing of an agreement. The Subsecretary would allocate financial support to local authorities to hire external consultants (teachers) (SEP, 2014). We will see what this name implied, and still does, in human terms for the teachers, since one of the drawbacks of the program has been teacher hiring and training.

For this reason, the General Direction of Accreditation, Incorporation, and Revalidation (DGAIR), a department of the SEP, implemented the National Language Certification (CENNI) in order to “establish norms regarding school control, accreditation and certification of knowledge and attitudes for foreign languages and Spanish as a Foreign Language nationwide” (SEP, 2009b, p.1). Based on the European framework and Canadian benchmarks, it created Mexican language standards to certify language proficiency for work, general, or academic objectives. Although it was also created to certify other languages (German, French, and Portuguese), English was emphasized due to the nature of the program. Proximity to the US and the fact that English had already been taught at the secondary level for about a century were the factors that inclined the balance in favor of English, as opposed to French or Portuguese, when the National Coordination pondered, at an earlier stage, what languages to teach. These norms would be valid until December 2009 and would be evaluated in 2010 (SEP, 2009b).

However, instead of being evaluated, yet another program emerged: the PRONI. The PRONI was attached to the General Direction of Curriculum Development. Its aim was to assure the quality of learning in basic education, as well as the integral development of all population groups, through the strengthening of teaching processes and learning a foreign language (English) in public schools. To achieve this, technical and pedagogical conditions were established and international English language certification processes for both students and teachers promoted, as was the certification of teaching methodologies for language teachers. Through this program, the SEP planned to support previous actions taken dating to the pilot programs in the 2009–2010 cycle, in public preschools and primary schools. In addition, the curricular design of PRONI was aligned with national and international standards such as the National Certification of Language Proficiency (CENNI) in Mexico and the European Framework of Reference (MCER). The program also established a teaching profile aligned with the profiles, parameters, and standards of the National Coordination of Professional Teaching Services, as well as a profile for students expecting to reach the B1 level in the MCER by the end of secondary school.

Analyzing the process through the lens of language policy, we can perceive the changing sociocultural dynamics that surrounds personnel policies in early English language programs in Mexico. First, ideologies associated with English as a “world language” or “lingua franca” strongly influence a community’s perception of English as the language that should be learned by Mexican children and youngsters,

leading parents, teachers, local teachers, local coordinators, and authorities to converge on changing the role of English in education.

Second, operative problems education authorities were having with groups of teachers at the time included classroom space and the presence of English teachers in what they perceived to be their personal domain. Interestingly, this cosmetic solution failed to see the problem integrally, disregarding the sociocultural issues associated with learning English, yet it remained a learning resource for some.

A third issue is the prevailing and convergent beliefs, interests, values, and emotions associated with learning English. The effort made by those involved in PNIEB ended up in a macro English language policy. Yet, while local communities in the states expected to receive support from the federal government in order to ameliorate their infrastructure, federal coordinators and public administrators from the Ministry of Education and government expected political gains of a different order, a exemplified by the Sorry project (O'Donoghue, 2015) and Sayer's response to it (2015). Therefore, the PNIEB became an important discursive configuration into which everyone could add her/his own desires. Meanwhile, at least two of the agents of planning are affected by the uncertainty and undefined identity of this project: students and teachers. The programs only made cosmetic changes to PNIEB, yet they were still renamed, since the new administrations were not able to stop the willingness of the agents for it to stand, nor did they dare change or override the policy.

What are the underlying issues that stripped all meaning from such proposals? We see that English carries considerable weight worldwide, but what is the value of people and what is the value of that language when it is spoken by different speakers? What is the value of the arguments those speakers construct based on their own sociocultural viewpoints? How have teachers of English been valued as language planning agents and decision makers within all this policy activity?

## **Personnel Policies Regarding Early English Language Learning**

Before defining personnel policy, a word should be said about the perspective we hold in approaching it. To my mind, personnel policies can be understood as a system in which there is a disposition of some elements and we can find links among them, adapting constantly to a contingent changing context. Therefore, personnel and students create a dialogic relationship between the system and the context, where there is space for them modify and reconstruct each other continuously (Moriello, 2016). Thus, I will analyze personnel policies from the systems perspective, considering Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework of language education goals, as well as Cooper's (1989) accounting scheme for the study of language planning. I believe these frameworks are suitable to understand the

interrelations of the elements implied in understanding, specifically those associated with the agents of planning.

Cooper (1989) created a framework to study language planning, which he called an accounting scheme. The accounting scheme has some general elements that systematic language planning might need, and it is open to other elements, since it provides a finite group of components from which infinite kinds of systems can emerge. Kaplan and Baldauf themselves departed from this idea in devising their own ecological view of language planning. Cooper provides a framework that comprises “what actors attempt to influence what behaviours, of which people, for what ends, under what conditions, situational, structural, cultural, environmental, informational; by what means, through what decision making and with what effect” (Cooper, 1989, p.98). These questions made Baldauf critically reflect and rethink, through experience, the notion of agency, “who has the power to influence change in micro LPP situations” (Baldauf, 2005, p. 147), which strongly set the focus of this study on the meso and micro language planning levels, to analyze the endeavors of local agents and the contexts in which they operate.

### ***Personnel Policy Definition***

Personnel policy is defined as “identifying, training and maintaining cadres of skilled language teachers as a major objective in language-in-education planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). It establishes the principles that define the profile of language teachers: the criteria used to select them for teaching appointments and the language proficiency standards against which they will be evaluated.

### ***Personnel Policies on English Language Learning in Mexican Basic Education***

Personnel policies, as systems, can be understood by an interrelated group of elements that are arranged differently as they adapt to the ever-changing political, sociohistoric, and educational contexts that transform their identity. As we have described, early English language learning was crisscrossed by two stages of early English language learning personnel policy. The first stage is marked by community involvement in supporting pilot programs in some states of the republic, with local authorities, coordinators, teachers, and parents cooperating to make the program happen. This program was launched during the 6-year term of President Fox, when the National Action Party defeated the Institutional Revolutionary Party in 2000, and there was a positive view regarding globalization and internationalization, as well as an optimistic atmosphere toward governmental decisions. Later this program was complemented by the Encyclomedia program. This program was

implemented as a result of the conflicts between classroom teachers, who usually spend all day with students and teach all subjects, except English, and English teachers, since there were concerns about the former being displaced by the latter. Encyclomedia seemed to be a practical solution but it proved to be a failure due to the lack of teachers' language proficiency, teaching development, and autonomy, but also due to the fact that Encyclomedia had its limitations, as reported by Mejía Bricaire (2017).

The second stage is expansion, marked by national top-down policies and disarticulated communities and poor communication and a high level of uncertainty. By the end of Calderón's 6-year term, there was an urgent need to devise a better structured proposal. The mesolevel proposal, though, disregarded the fact that Mexico was a multicultural and multilingual society and deepened the socioeconomic and cultural inequalities within urban and rural communities, as well as those of marginalized ones. It was a top-down policy that supported the idea of "one policy fits all." Unfortunately, that was hardly the case. Personnel policy was reduced to a minimum of basic regulations, the B2 level of proficiency, and teacher training or teacher certificate. Communication links and dialogic interactions came to an end. Policy agents were isolated, which led to all sorts of misunderstandings. We now analyze the early English language learning personnel policy within Cooper's framework.

Personnel policies in the first stage were at the meso level and seemed to be more manageable. It the actors of the policy seemed to be multiplex, in the sense that it was an agreement among the authorities of education, the parents, and the teachers, with the aim of teaching English to less-well-off children. Decisions were made in communities, which established local conditions for the program to succeed: classroom arrangements, material resources, teacher compensation, materials, and exams. The community had a closer relationship among their members and tried to persuade classroom teachers about the complementarity of learning English together with other subjects at school. However, class teachers remained reluctant to accept English teachers in their classrooms. Later the authorities came up with the idea of the Encyclomedia program.

Encyclomedia, though, was a macro level personnel policy. It was a cosmetic solution that expected classroom teacher to become English teachers, as this would solve the problem of the shortage of English teachers. The personnel policy was far-fetched, since it expected that classroom teachers would learn English together with students, through the Encyclomedia device. As a result, neither teachers nor students learned English. The actors of the personnel policy disregarded the minimum principles for a language policy to operate: a purpose. They had a resource, but the success of a policy cannot rest on a single device if teachers do not acquire English proficiency and English teaching skills. The conditions were not set to establish a reasonable personnel policy, structurally, socially, or culturally, since neither the students nor the teachers were autonomous enough to use Encyclomedia properly. Moreover, the proposal did not use previous studies to guide the decision-making progress, so the effects were basically negative.

The PNIEB was a better-informed macro level personnel policy proposal marked by a badly integrated teaching platform and a lack of communication between the

policy actor, the program's federal coordinators, and the affected communities. The main pitfall of the program was the need to train qualified teachers for the large early language learning population in a short time span. This personnel policy was promoted by society's elites and intended for the entire public basic education system in Mexico, led by the SEP. It attempted to homogenize the English pilot programs that had been in operation for several years and constituted a national language in education policy that aimed at diminishing inequality to opportunities to learn English at an early age, as well as to fit it with an international public scenario.

Many of the situational, structural, and even cultural conditions that existed in society were unfavorable for meso and micro level personnel policy. First, the policy needed to be implemented in 2009 so that by 2011 the policy's success would be evident, once Calderón's 6-year term was over. Such a large-scale program required hiring 98,000 English teachers dispersed in 32 states (Sayer, 2015). The government was to provide 30% of the program's funding, and local states would make up the 70% balance. However, by the time the program started, no funds had been allocated and federal funding had been earmarked mainly for teachers' salaries, which raised some eyebrows and questions about the coverage of the teachers' requirement, and a shoestring budget for the development of curricula, designing materials, and exams. During 2011–2012, only 11% of preschools in Mexico had introduced English, and that in urban areas.

A general tendency, though, reported by Sayer (2015), showed that in the period 2009–2012, most coordinators followed the guidelines. Language proficiency was preferred to teacher training when a decision had to be made. Teachers came from different fields: biology, business, tourism, history, biology. In some cases, even migrant returnees were considered to take up English teaching. This decision had important consequences for the program, in that teachers who had no or limited training were left with no tools to adapt to a myriad of teaching situations and even little capacity for reflection and self-criticism.

Second, the country in those times was experiencing social turmoil, specifically violence and insecurity due to drug trafficking. Many government resources have been devoted to the war against drugs. In addition, local economies in the states had high levels of poverty and outmigration due to limited job opportunities and international economic policies that favored transnationals at the expense of local economic development.

It is true that funding had an impact in the way each of the states achieved the goal of integrating English into the basic education curriculum. Yet the problem was of a multiplex nature. Northern regions, such as Tamaulipas (Sayer, 2015) and Coahuila (Jiménez Flores, 2008), had two of the most successful programs even before the government implemented the 592 Agreement and the PNIEB. This was mainly due to the creation of special departments of English that were in charge of the program and therefore oversaw the development, implementation, and evaluation of language policies regarding the teaching of English locally. The program in Coahuila even received recognition in 2010 for having the highest English language proficiency in the country, from third year of preschool to the sixth level of primary

school (Secretaría de Educación de Coahuila, n.d.). Other successful programs in the early years were simply left to expire owing to rivalries between political parties in the state of Morelos, as reported by Chepetla et al. (2008). Other programs never achieved a level of basic stability owing to poor salaries and hazardous working conditions in urban and rural areas, even related to drug trafficking (Sayer, 2015).

Third, a cultural problem for the implementation of this personnel policy in basic education in Mexico was the teachers' union. Basic education class teachers usually graduate from the Normal School of Teachers, and they are specifically prepared to teach at this level of education, which makes it a very close-knit and tight group that is difficult to convince about the advantage of having an extra teacher of English in their classrooms. English teachers from universities with English language teaching diplomas and language proficiency certifications were seen as outsiders to the preschool/primary school space, which for years had been the space of so-called *normalistas* (teachers of the Normal School). In addition, university English teachers had no training in teaching children, except those who held educational psychology or education titles, but culturally they were seen as superior and represented a threat to Normal teachers. Therefore, the education authorities, instead of meddling in that system, devised a subsystem for hiring English teachers directly from the federal pool of English teachers and left local coordinators to administer them in such a way that directors in local schools had no idea about English teachers' working conditions, their obligations, needs, and concerns. Equally, English teachers were not integrated into the school community. They only taught classes that paid by the hour and created no bonds with school directors, other class teachers, or parents. Moreover, there was no direct communication between the federal coordinator and local ones, who had to make due with few resources and teacher desertion. As a result, the outcome was contrary to expectations. As pointed out earlier, by 2011, only 11% of preschools in Mexico had introduced English, specifically in urban areas. The local state governments backed off due to the tight budget.

Regarding personnel policy during the PFCEM it was also a meso planning strategy that sought to ameliorate educational achievement and student retention at school. Specifically, support was given for implementing L2 teaching, and English in particular. A main difference in this program was that the national policy was not intended to be compulsory for the 32 federal entities of the republic. It was a voluntary program for those entities that felt the need to strengthen their English teaching programs because of the low quality of instruction and high drop-out rate.

Interested schools signed a letter of agreement with the government to indicate their needs, according to certain items proposed by the education authorities. The federal government would support local state governments with the implementation of the program, the production and distribution of English instructional materials, teacher and guidance counsellor development, and international certifications for both teachers and students. The proposal aimed to maintain regular communication among participants, that is, school directors, external advisors, technicians, teachers, and parents, through regular meetings to follow up and accompany the process. However, the large number of teachers, supervisors, and students surpassed the

resources allotted for the program nationally, which led to frustration for those who did not benefit from the program. Teaching materials were inadequate for needs. At the micro level, this personnel policy created confusion among teachers and local educational authorities, who saw their efforts fall short because of supply shortages.

The PRONI was intended to reorganize and oversee the PBIEB, with the aim that students would participate in social activities in order to develop their competencies in English as second language based on sociocultural and linguistic competence development, using projects and generating products of learning, based on the *savoir*, *savoir faire*, and *savoir être* philosophy. In relation to personnel policies, this program attempted to provide Normal teachers in initial development English as a source of communication during their studies, so it became a central transversal learning in the curriculum. This macro planning personnel policy was devised during Peña Nieto's 6-year term. It was a top-down policy, which encountered resistance from teachers and multiple problems regarding its implementation: limited knowledge of teaching by competencies, limited experience with the teaching model, and difficulties evaluating according to it, insufficient hours to reach the goal, and unsuitability of contents. Teachers required more training, language and teaching certifications, and better working conditions.

The curriculum of Normal Schools then included the teaching of English at a rate of 4 hours a week, which would allow them to reach the B2 level by the end of their studies as Normal teachers. However, the number of hours conflicted with teaching practices, which demanded from a week to a month outside of school. In addition, the number of teachers to be trained, 93,766, exceeded the number of teachers available for the program (1200), distributed among 466 Normal Schools (SEP-DGESPE, 2018). That meant that every 3 teachers would end up teaching about 18 groups of 20, which, of course, was unrealistic. This personnel policy reflected the poor planning of the policy and disregard for the planning context, the conditions and purposes of language in education planning, and a lack of knowledge of what education planning was about to make change happen. The lack of focus led to a complete failure of the program. Even if the following year the ministry's plan was to increase the coverage at the primary and preschool levels nationwide, and even pretended to expand the program to the secondary school level in the following year, the local governments retreated. The ministry claimed that there was a lack of funds, despite the expectation that by 2018 the program had reached 100% coverage.

Cooper's framework reveals a broken system, since it was not clear how educational authorities planned to achieve their personnel planning goals, if conditions, means, and decisions came into conflict, causing disarticulation. Regarding personnel policies and based on Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) personnel policy framework, we identify three personnel planning goals that conflict and reflect a systemic dissonance in the reviewed literature: source of teachers, teacher training, and rewarding teachers.



### *Conflicting Planning Goal 1: Source of Teachers*

The first conflicting element is the source of teachers. As mentioned earlier, PISA evaluation led public education authorities to modernize the curriculum, which included the teaching of English at the basic education level and its articulation with secondary schools. However, before this happened there were local initiatives enforced by local education authorities and parents who were interested in developing children's English language abilities, perhaps influenced by prominent ideologies of English as a lingua franca of business and social mobility. Twenty-one states out of 31 were involved in this initiative in Mexico: Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo León, Puebla, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tamaulipas, and Veracruz (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2017, p. 4; López de Anda, 2013, p. 9).

Five of these states started their participation in 2000 and 2003, and more programs ensued in the following years. During this period, teachers were hired by the local state. They were selected according to each state's guidelines, which mainly consisted of language proficiency and language teacher training. Unfortunately, teachers were paid for fees, with resources that came from the local state and parents, who had high expectations regarding the teaching of English at an affordable price for their kids. In Coahuila, it was reported that this was a stable period for the system, since there was a number of hours fixed for a number of teachers, even if they had no benefits. By 2009, 68 teachers became full-time teachers in Coahuila, with decent working conditions. Unfortunately, this was far from being the case for most teachers in other parts of the country.

This unstable working situation intensified once the PNIEB was in place. Teachers experienced anxiety and stress for not being paid, so they ended up commuting from one school to another to make ends meet. The situation grew even more dramatic when they had to bring their own copies of books to work for the day, since the books had not been delivered and they had to figure out how to adapt the contents to the children's needs, to the curriculum, and to the context, without suitable training; further, this did not have the proper pedagogical training or resources for proper time management, discipline, materials, or exam design.

From the point of view of the actors, personnel sources had the following effects. Academics emphasize the importance of teachers' theoretical knowledge, specific strategies, lesson planning, modeling, practice, feedback, independent application, and program coherence (Ramírez-Romero et al., 2014; Reyes et al., 2011), but also teachers ability to engage in such activities as learning about the community where they teach and adapt their teaching to the context and community they serve (Lengeling et al., 2013; Pamplón & Ramírez, 2013; Reyes et al., 2011). To use a musical metaphor, administrators perform in a kind of solo concert, where the institutional structure leaves no place for articulating participants with the orchestra. The hierarchical structure of the SEP leaves the leaders of ELT (English Language Teaching) programs on their own, with no guidelines on decision making unclear

and or ethical issues. This translates into conflicts with teachers, parents, students, and local and federal authorities, leading to a world of chaos and misunderstanding (Chepetla et al., 2008; Collins & Pérez, 2013; Lengeling et al., 2013) and in some cases even to a lack of commitment and enthusiasm (Pamplón & Ramírez, 2013; Perales Escudero et al., 2012).

As observed by researchers, students rarely experience the language in sociocultural, contextualized situations, and some of the language learning situations are extremely demanding for the children, which causes students lack of interest. Teachers see themselves as having been left in the lurch, as indicated by the lack of support for about a 2-year period in Guanajuato, for example: no copies of materials, no Internet, no CD players, lack of guidance for newcomers, lack of communication and support from coordinators, unclear operative issues, and role and task confusion. Despite the fact that all programs explicitly stated a need for teacher training and certification, as well as the importance of a commitment from planning agents to provide the resources to carry this out, teacher training and certification opportunities remained insufficient. Apart from that, working conditions barely improved from 2000 to 2018, and communication deteriorated. In brief, bad conditions of implementation led to chaos and prevented workable personnel policies from being established regarding the source of teachers.

### *Conflicting Planning Goal 2: Teacher Training*

The second conflicting element is teacher training. The conflict within this element of personnel policy entails a discontinuity between discourse and the actual teacher training situation and context. This becomes evident in at least five themes: first, the need for training teachers to teach children and youngsters; second, the development of teachers' language proficiency; third, teachers' acritical approach to the teaching of English; fourth, the mistaken conception of English as a key to success and social mobility; and fifth, teachers' unawareness and lack of self and others' perception of their stance as language policy agents and actual decision makers in their own classrooms and agents of change in their own communities.

First, English teachers in PNIEM have usually undergone teacher training, either through tertiary or secondary education (Escuela Normal Superior), but English teaching language programs usually fail to address the teaching of children or young people. However, Mercau Appiani et al. (2009) discussed an initiative taken by a large public university in Mexico. They detected a gap in English teachers' preparation to teach children and proposed an online English development course for early English language teaching.

Second, higher education programs on teaching generally graduate students with inadequate language ability, mainly with respect to listening and speaking. According to Ramírez-Romero and Sayer (2016), many states currently offer a diversity of teacher training activities. Yet the number of qualified teachers who

meet program needs is limited and the relevance, quantity, and quality of the courses leave much to be desired.

A third gap in teachers' development is the acritical approach with which English is taught to children, especially in plurilingual contexts, where indigenous languages are being displaced by English (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). López-Gópar (2013, 2014) proposes developing a "praxicum": "to teach English critically by welcoming indigenous children's languages into [the teacher's] classroom and developing identity texts in class activities, thereby creating an inclusive classroom environment in which the children negotiated affirming identities and came to value each other's languages" (López-Gópar, 2014, p. 310). This could be perfectly appropriate in a teacher training course or in an undergraduate program for English language teachers and help student teachers reflect on their activity related to language diversity in their classrooms.

A fourth issue has to do with the misconception that teaching English at an earlier age will directly lead to English language learning (O'Donoghue, 2015; Sayer & López Gopar, 2009). Early English learning demands several undertakings. First, to take into consideration the idea that teachers will have to integrate the teaching of English with children's literacy, this implies adjusting activities to their age and learning styles, as well as engaging in reflective thinking with the program's community: teachers, researchers, coordinators, directors, group teachers, students, and parents. Mercau Appiani (2009a) studied the pitfalls accompanying the teaching of yes-no questions to Mexican children in a bilingual school that followed the Primary Years Program (PYP). After comparing the kind of exposure a native child has to the language and a student in the classroom, she shows how different it is to teach a specific linguistic point in English as a second language and proposes the following pedagogical techniques: have students use the language as many times as possible through different interactive activities, which will help students store language information in long-term memory, recycle interesting activities and subjects by presenting them in different ways during the school year, adapt them to different learning styles, encourage students' motivation and self-confidence through the use of games and making them feel accepted, creative, and loved, and evaluate their progress periodically (Mercau Appiani, 2009b). Learning will only occur if certain pedagogical conditions for children are considered.

An important issue is the fact that some teachers eventually become local or federal coordinators, which implies organizing and giving structure to the implementation of the curriculum at a technical level, but also having an integral view of the diverse situations in which the curriculum is applied. This requires developing a sense of community in the classroom and in places of work, so every agent of planning, whether student, English teacher, group teacher, parent, director, local coordinator, federal coordinator, academic, or politician, can make decisions about the pertinence and drawbacks of the policies implemented locally and federally. This entails the recognition that language teachers are important language policy agents in producing language and social change in their educational contexts and in their larger communities. The actual training of teachers, therefore, shows how English is at the same time an aspiration-related language and a goal failure,

since reality fails to fulfill the promised achievability, in the sense that learning goals could hardly be reached if this teaching situation prevailed.

### ***Conflicting Planning Goal 3: The Reward for Teachers***

No matter how perfect the curriculum or organized the system is, English language teaching will never improve if we do not acknowledge English language teachers as participants in their own right. Actual working conditions show that this has hardly been the case in the basic education experience. Personnel policies are disintegrative, in the sense that teachers are left on their own to resolve their own teaching difficulties. Personal policies can only come into reality if they are thoroughly reflected upon and enacted. The literature reports repeatedly on inconsistencies faced by teachers in their everyday lives. It is not enough to be a qualified teacher in order for students to learn. Teachers need a proper working environment and strong commitment of local and federal coordinators to be able to work in the best conditions possible.

### **Identifying Elements and Interrelations Within the System**

I view the personnel policy system as containing two complementary dimensions: the disposition of the elements that the system comprises and the interrelations or links among them. These exist as integrated totalities in each situation or context. Sometimes one is more salient, depending on a dynamic, open, and changing context that is continuously represented by human activities. In this way, both the system and the context have a dialogic relationship, in a continuum of flux, where they modify and reconstruct each other alternately and continuously, in a dialogic, interactive relationship (Moriello, 2016). In this final section, I will analyze the reviewed literature from a systems perspective considering Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework of language-in-education goals, as well as Cooper's (1989) accounting scheme for the study of language planning.

If we screen the facts through the descriptive frameworks of Kaplan and Baldauf (2005) and Cooper (1989), we observe that the aim of policy differs depending on the agents' role within the system and the point of view taken. Perspectives vary from the standpoints of politicians, parents, teachers, academics, local and federal coordinators, external organizations, and students. The general aim is to learn English because it is a widespread language of communication and is associated ideologically with competition and social mobility. Yet politicians search for accountables to prove sexennial productivity, whereas parents hope their children will climb higher socially, and for some communities, access to early English language learning is simply a human right. The moment was decided first by local communities and then, spurred by international organizations, the Ministry of

Education became aware of its prominence and devised an education policy that framed the language in education policy.

Given that the policy is restricted to the school domain, no reports have been published so far regarding other contact children or teachers might have with the English language at home, on the streets, or at work for teacher training. No effort is reported, but one, Atlacomulco Normal School, sends its teachers abroad to improve their language skills and expand their cultural experiences (CCILE, 2009). To the best of my knowledge, no cultural events or educational projects mention, implicitly or explicitly, spaces where English can spread, so it is used and ultimately acquired by both children and teachers.

The main pitfall in this early English language learning policy has been the cost-benefit planning. A more gradual implementation of the policy could have been more favorable, as suggested by the council in its positioning paper (2009). Unfortunately, political time constraints limited politicians' willingness to acknowledge this limitation, and they went further into a whole expansion of the language in preschools and primary schools, which has resulted in a failure to cover the demand of teachers needed to enact the policy into action. Ultimately, personnel language policy in this context has remained somewhat static, in the sense that only in a very few cases have their work conditions improved. Teachers with some sense of agency or with positive personal background conditions and self-esteem have found ways to cope with some very positive results in the state of Coahuila, for example.

Programs that had a stronger sense of community and involvement in the state programs have sufficed the undertaking of the PNIEB. However, the relationship between parents, teachers, and local coordinators was stronger in the state projects than in the PNIEB, where local coordinators played a secondary role. The PNIEB intensified individual interaction among the authorities in charge of the project and different agents separately: academics, school directors and coordinators, English teachers, students, and members of the language council; however, it did not promote interaction among them. This was highly counterproductive for appropriate implementation of the policy owing to poor communication.

Each early English language learning curriculum policy was interrelated to and, in the case of the PFCEB and the PRONI projects, even somewhat recycled from PNIEB. However, there does not seem to be any interconnection with indigenous languages curriculum policies, migration policies, or any other language policy. Despite French being one of the languages taught in public secondary schools, no trace is there to be considered as part of the curriculum in the near future, nor is any mention made of the consequences the early English learning policy will have for both students and teachers at that level. In sum, personnel language policy in early English language learning cannot be seen as a static planning goal to be completed in a 6-year term of office. Rather, it demands that agents of planning be flexible, adaptable, and agents of change. Teachers are called to constantly enter into a dynamic dialogue with other agents of planning and together reconstruct their practice and claim the reformulation of their status and role within the system.

Personnel language policies have made it impossible to achieve the goals of the language-in-education policy owing to diffuse communication and poor administration and resource planning. This has affected the implementation of the policy in at least two ways: the training of teachers and the motivation for them to remain in the program.

## Implication and Conclusions

For personnel policies to be implemented, it is important that language and socio-cultural diversities be considered; in addition, the goals should be realistic and there should be more intensive interaction among planning agents. For that to happen, teachers need to be able to make decisions and participate actively in the formulation of policy, not necessarily for the benefit of those in power. Teachers are capable of determining what is best for their contexts.

The context of English language teaching in Mexico serves as a good example of how learning English can deprive teachers as professionals. By naming them “outside consultants” they are stripped of their ability to be treated as part of a community of practice, within the practical tradition of teaching English at the basic education level that feeds meso and macro levels of personnel language planning. Rhetorically, this contrasts with the ideology of English as a path to obtain social mobility and competitiveness. Teachers are called to act in favor of their own rights and those of their students. Even more, are exhorted to engage in practical deliberation and praxis as individuals and as collectives since

educational traditions always evolve in and through the practice of self-aware educators who see their individual and collective praxis as needing to respond to new circumstances and opportunities. This evolution cannot be sustained for long just through the isolated innovations introduced into the tradition by individuals; they need to be interrogated in the community of enquiry that constitutes the profession. (Kemmis, 2008, p. 229)

The practices of self-aware agents in personnel planning and policies, as described in this paper, demand a more thoroughly articulated community whose decisions involve a clear dialogue between macro, meso, and micro levels of planning, which entails a more systematic, integrated, organic language-in-education policy. Criticizing current trends in globalization and internationalization that impact the mediums of instruction and teachers is essential because these issues are of concern for everyone in the field who wishes to devise a more dialogic, ecological, and human personnel policy (Baldauf, 2012).

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**Part IV**  
**Connecting Domains Across Language**  
**Policy**

# Chapter 11

## The Context of Schooling for Early Learners of Spanish in the United States



Maria R. Coady, Hyunjin Jinna Kim, and Nidza V. Marichal

**Abstract** Not unlike in many countries around the world, language learning policies in the United States (US) for early language learners is a complex process that is sociopolitically and historically situated. Although the US is a linguistically diverse country with no official national language, more than 30 states have declared English its official language, while none has declared Spanish official, despite its extensive use and social, economic, and political influence in the country. This chapter focuses on Spanish early language learning policies and practices in the US with children from prekindergarten through grade 2, or between the ages of 3 and 7. Because of the decentralized nature of language policies in the US and the power of each state to set policies, we focus on the state of Florida to illustrate one example of language-in-education policies related to curriculum resources, methodology, and personnel. We note the intersection of these areas for early learners of Spanish. We conclude that the rich linguistic resources of Spanish in the US have systematically been weakened as a result of monolingual policies and political pressures that fail to support native Spanish speakers, while simultaneously building modest levels of Spanish proficiency among nonnative early learners of Spanish.

**Keywords** Early language learning · Language policy · The US · Spanish

Like most countries around the world, the United States (US) is a multilingual nation. With more than 300 million people covering a land area of approximately 3.7 million square miles, language policies and practices are complex in nature and result from a rich history of language practices. The US has 50 states and 14 territories. Importantly, language policies and practices in the US are decentralized, moving authority away from the national level to state-level organization and control. For instance, currently in the US only two states, Hawai'i and Alaska, have declared languages other than English as official (Crawford, 2000). The state of Hawai'i

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declared both English and Hawaiian as official in its constitution of 1978, and Alaska declared English and 20 Alaskan languages as official following a 2014 amendment to its official language act. Despite the two states' intention to promote native cultures and to preserve indigenous languages, these languages are frequently absent in government documents, government activities, and publicly funded publications (Alaska Legislature, 2019; Hawaii State Legislature, 2017). As of 2016, more than 30 states have declared English their sole official language (US English, 2016), despite the multilingual reality of the US.

The second most widely used language in the US is Spanish. According to data from the Pew Research Center, there are more than 40 million speakers of Spanish in the US, a growth of more than 230% since 1980 (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013). Despite those large numbers, language policies and planning in the US continue to reflect large social and political movements and narratives about Spanish speakers. For instance, in the current anti-immigrant climate of the US (Crawford, 2000; Massey, 2020), immigrants to the US from Mexico and Central America, most of whom speak Spanish as a first language (Zong & Batalova, 2018), have been described in the mainstream media as criminals, rapists, and gang members (Wolf, 2018). These descriptors fuel increasingly restrictive language policies that view languages other than English—primarily Spanish—as threats to the mainstream, English-dominant US culture, power, and sovereignty (Crawford, 2000; Feroso, 2018; Lippi-Green, 2011; Menken, 2013; Menken & García, 2010). In response, over the past century, Spanish, Hispanic, and Latinx<sup>1</sup> advocacy groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), continue to make important political, social, and economic changes for Spanish speakers (LULAC, 2019; Massey, 2016; Portes & Rumbault, 2014; Stepick & Stepick, 2009). The teaching of Spanish to young learners in the US is embedded in the tension of these competing national narratives, which affect language-in-education planning and practices.

This chapter focuses on the language-in-education planning, used interchangeably with “acquisition planning” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005; Phillipson, 1992), for Spanish among young learners in the US. We argue that effective early language learning policies for Spanish speakers is dependent upon strong first language development in Spanish, and early learning is also associated with personnel, methodology, and curriculum policies aligned to second language acquisition theories (Ortega, 2009; Valdés, 2005; Zentella, 1997). Research on the relationship between first and second language acquisition continues to underscore the essential need for strong, early first language development to build second language development and literacy (Ariza & Coady, 2018; Coady & Ariza, 2015; NICHHD, 2000). Thus, effective early educational provision includes highly prepared personnel to support second language development, methodologies that strengthen first and second

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<sup>1</sup>In this paper, we use the definition given by Nieto & Bode (2012), which differentiates Hispanic and Latino/a/x. Hispanics are heritage speakers of Spanish. Latino/a/x refers to pan-Latinos who may speak other languages such as indigenous languages, Portuguese, English, and more. The use of “x” in Latinx is a non-gender-specific alternative to Latino/a.



language learning, and curriculum policies that ensure equitable access to curriculum and learning.

This chapter begins with an overview of historical and national language learning trends related to Spanish language policies and planning from the mid-twentieth century on. We describe state-level policies and underscore the various policies and programs that support young learners of Spanish. Next, we focus on the state of Florida to demonstrate how state-level policies affect Spanish acquisition planning policies for young learners. Finally, we end this chapter with implications for advancing Spanish acquisition planning efforts for young learners of Spanish.

## **Linguistic Ecology of the United States**

### ***Sociohistorical Context of Spanish***

The US has a rich and diverse linguistic ecology. At the time of the first US settlements in what is now the territory of the US, multiple languages were used by native peoples, and some, such as Navajo, Cherokee, Ojibwe, and Hopi, continue to be spoken today (Siebens & Julian, 2011). Spanish was an original settlement language as Spanish explorers made their way to the North American continent and established the first American city in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565. As settlements and westward expansion continued, the languages of native peoples became increasingly decimated by settlers. With westward expansion, Spanish remained a widely used language spoken across a significant geographic area but particularly in the southwest US. For instance, until the Spanish-American War of 1846, modern California was Mexican territory. Spanish was a main language of communication, and the California constitution, drafted in 1849, was written in both English and Spanish. Other southern states, such as Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, which border Mexico, retain deep social connections to Mexico.

Today, Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in the US following English, according to the American Community Survey (ACS) data collected by the Pew Research Center (US Census Bureau, 2017). To contextualize Spanish language use in the US, it is noteworthy that more than 13% of the US population uses Spanish as a language in the home (US Census Bureau, 2017). Continued growth in the number of Spanish speakers is the result of both new immigrants to the US who come from Latin America and continued growth in the Latino population, many of whom speak Spanish. US Census data from 2015 (Colby & Ortman, 2015) project that the Hispanic population in the US—the group most likely to speak Spanish—will grow 115%, to 119 million by the year 2060.

Important to note is that, although data from decennial US Census and the annual ACS merge Spanish speakers into one demographic group, varieties of Spanish are used throughout the US. Mexican Spanish is used primarily, but not exclusively, in the American Southwest. For instance, data from the 2017 US Census indicate that

Florida has one of the most diverse Hispanic populations in the US. As of 2018, the Puerto Rican population was the second largest group of Spanish speakers in Florida (21%) following Cubans (28.4%). Together, Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish speakers encompass almost half the state's Latinx population, while the other half consisted of South Americans (18%), Mexicans (13.2%), Central Americans (11.2%), Dominicans (4.3%), and other Latinos (3.6%) (Figueroa, 2020). Cuban Spanish is prevalent in Florida and notably the Miami area (García & Otheguy, 1985), following Florida's close proximity and social and economic ties to Cuba. Puerto Ricans, who primarily speak Spanish, are distinct from other Hispanic groups due to their long-standing colonial relationship with the US, which began following the Spanish American War of 1898 (Capielo et al., 2018). The US acquisition of Puerto Rico as a territory in 1898 has resulted in the creation of what has been termed a "transnational" identity or a "nation on the move" (Barreneche et al., 2012, p. 15). With the constant and circular movement of Puerto Ricans from the island to the mainland and back again, the citizenship status afforded them by the 1917 Jones Act and the island's political status as an *Estado Libre Asociado* (Free Associated State), Puerto Rico has become what Barreneche et al. (2012) called "the flying bus" or a revolving-door migration characterized by repeated and continuous round trips between the island and the mainland (p. 14). Capielo et al. (2018) described these migratory processes as follows:

Puerto Rican migration takes three forms: the "one-way migrants," who move permanently to the mainland; the "return migrants," who after many years return to the island from the mainland to re-establish residence; and the "circular migrants," who migrate back and forth between the island and the mainland. (p. 196)

The growing dominance of the Puerto Rican community in the US propelled by a "nation on the move" (Barreneche et al., 2012, p. 15) has reinforced Spanish as a key language not only in the state of Florida, but also in many major US cities across the US mainland (Duany, 2017).

Spanish speakers in the US wield tremendous social, political, and economic influence in the country. Social movements, such as the Chicano rights movement in the 1960s and the Cuban refugee crisis of 1959–1963 following the overthrow of the Batista government in Cuba by Fidel Castro, fortified Spanish speakers as participants in those social and civil rights movements. The Cuban refugee crises led to the first publicly funded two-way immersion (TWI) bilingual program in the US in 1963 in Miami, Florida (Coady, 2019a), at a time when other bilingual education programs were also beginning to emerge (Fránquiz, 2018). Currently, Spanish is the most widely used language as a medium of instruction alongside English in bilingual education programs across the US (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2019). Thus, the growth in Spanish as a medium of instruction in school for young learners is influenced by national trends in US immigration policies, mainstream sentiment, and federal and state educational policies that either promote or restrict bilingualism.

## Education for Young Learners of Spanish

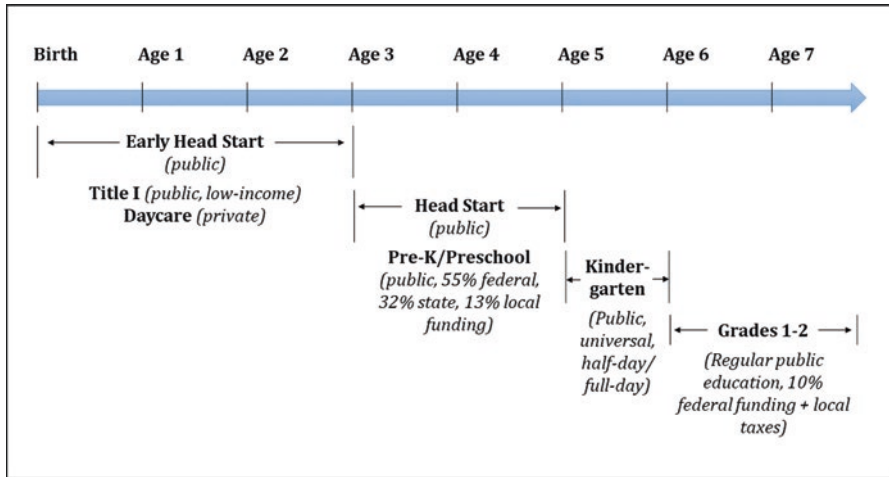
### *Additive and Subtractive Bilingual Education*

Spanish (and its multiple varieties) language programs can be additive or subtractive. *Additive* language programs are those programs in which a language such as Spanish is added or enhanced through schooling. The ultimate goal of additive language programs is to build second language competencies and literacies without taking away or restricting use of the first language. In contrast, *subtractive* language programs do not support long-term language and literacy development or growth and generally lead to a loss of the first language, as speakers shift from use of the home language to the dominant language of school and society (Wright, 2019). In practical terms, language programs such as bilingual education in school are implemented for a variety of reasons, including the social demographics of the surrounding community and social desire to build bilingualism and biliteracy; the linguistic resources of the community, including qualified bilingual teachers; access to bilingual curriculum; and garnering local community and family support (Soltero, 2016).

Soltero (2016) notes that buy-in among families and communities for additive bilingual education programs is essential, because families in the US fear that their children “will not learn English, will not do well academically, and will experience discrimination and prejudice” (p. 32). In a similar vein, Enever (2018) underscores the importance of parents and stakeholders in implementing educational programs for young learners. These concerns about first and second language development result from misinformation about language learning processes. These concerns also reflect broader social narratives about the status of minoritized languages, language use, and literacy in US society (Ovando, 2003; Ruiz, 1984).

### *Language Programs for Young Spanish Learners*

Language learning programs are a key structure through which language-in-education planning for Spanish among young learners can be supported and implemented. There are three main ways that Spanish learning programs can be implemented in the US: (a) in federally funded early learning programs, such as Early Head Start and Head Start, which include children from ages birth through 5; (b) in bilingual education programs, such as TWI education or transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs for children from kindergarten through grade 2; and (c) Spanish as a foreign language taught in the early grades for children in kindergarten through grade 2. Less formal approaches such as home care, nannies, or au pairs are other ways for young learners to acquire Spanish at young ages, but there is limited, systematic research in this area. Figure 11.1 demonstrates the program types and approximate ages of young learners in the US. Figure 11.1 also shows the funding sources for these programs: federal, state, or local funding.



**Fig. 11.1** Early Learning Programs in the United States

Language-in-education planning is affected by the home language backgrounds of young learners in the US. For example, among young learners who are first language speakers of Spanish and who use Spanish exclusively in the home, early educational programs should introduce oracy and literacy through Spanish to support language and literacy development of students (Snow et al., 1998). Building on Spanish speaking students’ home language is a more efficient approach to overall literacy development. However, this does not always happen in early learning programs. Other learners who are not native Spanish speakers also benefit from additive bilingual education programs for young learners (Wright, 2019). The latter group comprises young learners of Spanish for whom Spanish can be learned as a foreign language in school. We refer to these two groups of students collectively as young learners of Spanish in this chapter, but note that the process of early language learning and building literacy differs for these groups of students. The following section discusses Kaplan and Baldauf’s (2005) framework for language-in-education planning.

### Language-in-Education Planning Framework

In this chapter, we use Kaplan and Baldauf’s (2005) framework of language-in-education policy and planning. Their framework specifically focuses on the policy and planning decisions made to develop language learning and teaching programs (Baldauf, 2005). Kaplan and Baldauf describe different features of language-in-education planning for acquisition purposes, notably the areas of methodology, curriculum, and personnel. In reality, these three areas overlap in the sense that the language abilities of teachers (personnel planning) support effective

implementation (methodology) of curriculum for Spanish with young learners. For instance, a teacher who is prepared to teach in bilingual programs with young learners of Spanish may utilize curricula that build upon the early literacy skills of children, whereas a teacher who is less prepared in both languages may emphasize one language over another. This is to say that the range of policies associated with methodology, curriculum, and personnel reflects the realities of the micro-level language landscape (the classroom) and the resources available to enact the policy.

Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework is useful in examining how state policies in the US are framed for young learners of Spanish. For the US, curriculum resource policies consist of support for bilingual students and families, budgetary considerations to implement the curriculum, access to programs with bilingual or dual language (DL) curricula, such as state-funded voluntary prekindergarten (pre-K) programs, and how groups of students enroll in the programs. Methodology policies consider funding, materials, and instruction for young learners of Spanish, including the preparation of teachers and educators for students. In addition, methodology includes assessments in Spanish and the ability to monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction. Finally, personnel policy at the state level is a complex array of state-level guidelines and mandates that guide policy and preparation of teachers and educational leaders.

### *US Programs for Young Spanish Learners*

**Head Start** Starting at birth, public programs, such as Early Head Start, Head Start, kindergarten, and public education programs, are in place to support young learners of Spanish (Fig. 11.1). Head Start programs are federally funded programs for children from birth to age five from low-income backgrounds (OHS, 2019). In addition to support for a child's social-emotional health, cognitive development, and well-being through parental supports, Head Start programs support language and literacy development for young learners. Responding to the increasing demands of pre-K education and school readiness, congressional reauthorization of Head Start under the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 mandated literacy and language skills improvement (Powell et al., 2010). Head Start programs are funded through the federal US Department of Health and Human Services and aim to build school readiness. In 2017, 37% of participating families self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 23% indicated that Spanish was the primary language used in the home. With the need to build first language oracy to introduce literacy, an increasing number of Head Start programs currently offer Spanish native language support for young children (ECLKC, 2017). This underscores the increasing understanding among educators of the role of the first language in young children's bilingual development (Raikes et al., 2019).

**Bilingual Education Programs** Bilingual education programs are programs in which more than one language is used as a medium of instruction to teach academic

content. In the US, Spanish is the language most widely used in bilingual programs in addition to English (CAL, 2019), and most of those programs are designed for children from kindergarten through grade 3 or 5, depending on the model. Over the past 20 years, there has been exponential growth in programs increasingly referred to as DL (Boyle et al., 2015; García, 2009). Examples of bilingual education programs are one-way immersion, TWI, and TBE programs. While one-way immersion bilingual education programs have a majority of young English learners who speak languages such as Spanish, TWI programs include English-speaking students in combination with non-English speakers, both of whom receive education in two languages. TWI programs generally have 50% native English speakers with 50% other language learners such as Spanish speakers. Espinosa (2013) notes the cognitive and social benefits of bilingual education programs for young Spanish speakers and learners and makes the following statement:

English-only instruction in preschool is a detriment to Spanish development without providing an additional boost to English development. Thus, it appears that some form of bilingual education in preschool is additive rather than subtractive, meaning that children experience overall language gains: they maintain and develop their first language (which has cognitive, social, and cultural benefits) while beginning to acquire English skills. (p. 14)

Espinosa concedes that despite the benefits of bilingual programs for young learners, several areas impede implementation of the programs, namely, access to the programs, high-quality instruction, bilingual teachers, and family engagement.

TBE programs are subtractive in that they provide native language support only insofar as students (mainly Spanish speakers) learn English. The aim of these programs from kindergarten up to about grade 3 is to transition children from native language instruction into all-English instruction (García, 2009). TBE programs have been in decline over the past decade in the US, and TBE programs themselves are transitioning into TWI models. One example is the Orange County School District in the Orlando, Florida, area, a densely populated region. In agreement with similar findings across the US, the district has found that DL TWI programs are more effective for Spanish-speaking students in their acquisition of both Spanish and English, and English-speaking students also show gains in both languages (Durán & Palmer, 2014; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2014; McField & McField, 2014; J. Medina, personal communication, 2019). Noting the important role that bilingual and multilingual competencies play in the education of bilingual learners, de Jong et al. (2019) made the following statement:

Insisting on one-language use by teachers and students may limit students' ability to use their entire linguistic repertoire when working in either language of instruction. This, in turn, will restrict student learning and student engagement and can marginalize certain identities and home language and literacy practices. (p. 112)

This increase in TWI programs is indicative of how the field of bilingual education has responded to demands for bilingual language development through bilingual programs in the US (Coady, 2019a). In the following section, we focus on language-in-education planning in the state of Florida and demonstrate how policies are interpreted and implemented at the state level.

## Spanish for Young Learners in Florida

As noted earlier in this chapter, states in the US have tremendous scope and power to frame and implement language policies that meet the needs of their populace. We provide examples of this using the state of Florida, particularly demonstrating how states impose language-in-education planning policies and implement those policies for young learners of Spanish, the context in which we work. We focus on the specific program types, curricula, and personnel preparation in Florida for children between pre-K and grade 2.

### *Florida Language Context*

The state of Florida has about 21 million people, and approximately 28.7% speak a language other than English in the home (US Census Bureau, 2017). The 2017 ACS report indicates that about 21% of Florida's population speaks Spanish. Florida declared English its official language in 1988 under Ballot Measure 11, and the status of English is enshrined in the Florida constitution. Despite this declaration, everyday communication from state websites, including Florida voting ballots, are available in Spanish and English. Thus, although Florida policies lean politically toward a monolingual orientation, in practice the state offices must respond to the multilingual realities of the people in the state, in which Spanish is a prominent and important language.

In addition, although English is the official language of the state, that designation was not intended to affect educational policies. In recent years, however, the Florida Department of Education (FL DOE) has used the state's official English status to circumnavigate the federal government's recommendation for states to develop and use native language assessments for English learner students, of which about 85% are Spanish speakers in Florida (FL DOE, 2018). As noted earlier, Florida's proximity to and history with Cuba and Puerto Rico fortifies social ties with those communities, which constitute a significant diaspora (Figueroa, 2020). Noteworthy is that, subsequent to Castro's takeover of Cuba in 1959, Miami, Florida, became the experimental site of the first funded TWI program in the US, Coral Way Elementary School, in 1963 (Coady, 2019a). Currently, there are more than 125 elementary (primary level) bilingual education programs in 12 out of 67 of the state's school districts (Coady, 2019b), and about 90% of those programs serve Spanish and English speakers as young participants.



## *Policies in Florida for Young Learners of Spanish*

Florida offers universal pre-K across the state. The funding for this program derives about 50% from the federal government, 32% from the state of Florida, and 13% from local sources such as property taxes (Fig. 11.1). The state then allocates funding for school districts, of which there are 67 in the state. The districts then make determinations about the types of programs and the languages in addition to English in which the programs are offered, if any. Local and state policies address the objectives of language teaching and learning. In particular, there is increasing demand for Spanish-English DL immersion, such as TWI, programs in Florida, especially for children in grades kindergarten through 5 (FABE, 2019), with the goal of building literacy in English and in Spanish. Unfortunately, limited resources are available to prepare teachers for young learners of Spanish, and some school districts hire Spanish language teachers from Spain in bilingual education programs (Mackinney, 2016) to meet the demands of personnel policy. This is due to the fact that not enough teachers are trained with high levels of literacy in Spanish to facilitate instruction in Spanish in formal school settings.

Florida's language policies remain contentious. Since 1990, state-level policies for ELs [English learners] mandate 300 hours of preparation for pre-K through grade 6 teachers across five curricular areas: second language teaching methods, assessment, cross-cultural communication, applied linguistics, and curriculum. Educators must pass a state assessment to receive the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement on their teaching credential. When this mandate was implemented in 1990 following a legal court case, English learners—primarily young speakers of Spanish—had been experiencing low academic achievement relative to native English speakers. Despite more than 25 years of implementation of this teacher education (personnel) policy, the gap between English learning students and native English speakers has not significantly closed, calling into question the effectiveness of this policy (Coady et al., 2019a). Owing to the restrictive nature of language policies in Florida, it remains difficult to assess Spanish language proficiency among young learners of Spanish and of Spanish-speaking students who participate in TWI or TBE programs.

## *Preschool Language-in-Education Policies in Florida*

There are limited data and information about Spanish and bilingual education programs for children between the ages of 3 and 4 in Florida. Since the launch of the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Florida program in 2002, the state has required access to preschool education for all 4-year-olds. Florida is one of only four states that serves over 70% of 4-year-olds in state-funded preschools. However, data on the learning outcomes from this group of students are not widely available (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2018). In addition, although the state has large numbers of

Spanish speakers, the FL DOE does not report on preschool-level English learners or young learners of Spanish participating in bilingual education programs.

Florida’s School Readiness Program, which is a separate initiative that began in 1999 and was expanded in 2001, provides financial and health support to children between ages 3 and 4 whose parents are migratory laborers (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2018). The School Readiness Program collaborates with other state programs serving young learners, such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and VPK (Office of Early Learning, OEL, 2019a). Florida administers annual developmental screening to all children in the School Readiness Program instead of screening or collecting enrollment data based on children’s home language (OEL, 2018a).

As illustrated in Table 11.1, in terms of curriculum policy, there are no specific Florida state standards for young learners of Spanish or their Spanish language learning development. Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (ELDS) encompass the following eight domains: (a) physical development, (b) approaches to learning, (c) social and emotional development, (d) language and literacy, (e) mathematical thinking, (f) scientific inquiry, (g) social studies, and (h) creative expression through the arts. In the language and literacy domain, the objective is stated as developing children “to communicate with sounds, words and gestures, and eventually, the way they learn to read and write” (OEL, 2019b). In addition, the social studies domain includes standards about identifying, understanding, and exploring cultures. Unlike some other states that provide specific standards for preschool home language or Spanish language learning standards, Florida only provides standards for language and literacy development without specific reference to English or other languages.

Concerning methodology policy, the FL DOE is required to provide a list of approved curricula that meet the School Readiness Program performance standards (OEL, 2018b). Among the list of approved School Readiness curricula, Scholastic Big Day for Pre-K is one curriculum that is provided in both English and Spanish

**Table 11.1** State-level Pre-K Curriculum, Methodology, and Personnel Policies in Florida for Spanish Learning

Curriculum policy	Methodology policy	Personnel policy
Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program	School Readiness Program curriculum	BA required only for lead teachers in public and nonpublic schools
No enrollment data by home language; developmental screening	For example, <i>Scholastic Big Day</i> for pre-K English/Spanish	Specialization in pre-K not required
Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (ELDS)	Child assessments must be aligned with ELDS	No specific bilingual training required
Objective: learning to communicate, read, and write		Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC); 10 hours/year in-service professional development

and that includes materials, professional development (PD), and technology to implement the curriculum. In addition, Florida's assessment or developmental screening of a child for school readiness must align with the state's Early Learning and Development Standards (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2018).

Finally, all of Florida's 67 school districts must provide a 300-hour VPK program during the summer months, June–August, each year. Although only lead teachers in summer VPK programs are required to hold a bachelor of arts (BA) degree in Florida preschools, 71.5% of the teachers hold a BA (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2018). Teachers can specialize in areas such as early childhood education, pre-K education, family and consumer science, or any other teacher certification areas. Teachers in both public and nonpublic preschools must maintain a valid credential (CDA or FCCPC, see Table 11.1) and renew it every 5 years. Also, all child care personnel are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of in-service PD training every year. Although credentials are clearly stipulated for teachers at the pre-K level, no specific personnel policies, such as training requirements or qualifications, are in place to support bilingual learners or young learners of Spanish, let alone state-level data collected to report on pre-K level bilingual teacher qualifications.

## **Kindergarten Through Grade 2 Language-in-Education Policies in Florida**

Across the state, the number of students who speak languages other than English such as Spanish determines the type of programs and the way those programs are implemented. For instance, in urban area such as Orlando and Miami, bilingual education programs with Spanish speakers continue to grow (e.g., OCPS, 2020). For children at younger ages, Early Head Start and Head Start programs can support first language acquisition in Spanish when educators are prepared through personnel policy and when they have support from the local school district and community. Additive bilingual programs such as TWI programs that continue beyond Head Start into the lower elementary grades—that is, kindergarten through grade 2—support Spanish language development for Spanish speakers and English speakers.

The FL DOE provides resources, instructional toolkits, and standards through their online portal of state standards (CPALMS, 2019a). The state standards contain English Language Development standards (ELD.K12.ELL), which set guidelines for English learning students' English development in content areas including language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. However, there are no specific standards provided for young learners in grades K–2, but rather general standards for all K–12 grade levels. World languages standards, including standards for learning Spanish, are organized based on performance levels rather than grade levels. Those are divided into nine levels: novice low/mid, novice high, intermediate low, intermediate mid, intermediate high, advanced low, advanced mid, advanced high,

and superior. Each performance level includes the following areas: interpretative listening, reading, and communication; presentational speaking and writing; culture, connections, comparisons, and communities. Due to the absence of grade-level world languages standards, young bilingual learners of Spanish have no opportunity to develop bilingual academic language and literacy skills through a comprehensive curriculum that meets both their performance level and their developmental level.

As outlined in Table 11.2, the objectives of language learning are determined at two levels. The state policy, as illustrated in the English Language Development Standards, is to develop students’ ability to communicate knowledge and information in English. In addition, the world languages standards aim to foster the development of linguistic skills and understanding of linguistic features in languages other than English (CPALMS, 2019b). At the local school district level, subtractive and additive approaches and orientations toward second language acquisition, described earlier in this chapter, also determine the goals of teaching English or world languages to young learners of Spanish.

Under the 1990 Florida Consent Decree, described earlier as a policy that guides the preparation of teachers of English learning students, all school districts are required to collect data of students’ home language and national origin. Based on the data, whether a student is in need of ESOL program services is determined by a committee of educators, in conjunction with data on the student’s proficiency levels in English. Followed by the identification of ELs, a written LEP (Limited English Proficient) student plan outlines a student’s instructional program type and time as well as English language assessment data. There are limited data on students in grades K through 2 who are not required to have their English language development assessed. Furthermore, CPALMS (2019b) provides limited lessons or resources to teach content in Spanish to young learners. Most lesson plans and resources about Spanish language or culture are covered in the context of Spanish history in social studies for upper-grade levels 4–12 with the exception of a counting lesson given in both English and Spanish for students in grade levels K–1.

In terms of personnel policy, all of Florida’s public school teachers are required to obtain a bachelor’s degree and should complete prerequisites in a teacher preparation program (Teacher Certification Degrees, 2019). A major challenge in Florida

**Table 11.2** State-level K-2 Curriculum, Methodology, and Personnel Policies in Florida for Spanish Learning

Curriculum policy	Methodology policy	Personnel policy
Subtractive vs. additive programs	English language assessment, LEP student plan	BA required for lead teachers
CPALMS standards: English language development and world languages	Limited Spanish lesson/ resources	ESOL endorsement (300 master plan points or 15 college semester hours)
Objective: communication in English and understanding in world languages	TWI, TBE, or world languages programs (K-3 or K-5)	Few dual language or bilingual certificate programs

is identifying personnel with adequate training to teach in additive bilingual education programs. School districts offer in-service teacher PD for kindergarten through grade 2, and recently a bilingual certificate to prepare educators in TWI dual language education programs has been made available to educators working in those programs. Among credentialed teachers, the 300-hour ESOL requirement to work with nonnative English-speaking students remains in place (Table 11.2). However, the emphasis of that program is on English language acquisition, suggesting a subtractive orientation and not one geared toward building the bilingual landscape of Florida in which Spanish is a resource for growth and learning (Ruiz, 1984).

## Discussion

This paper examined three areas of Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework related to language-in-education planning for young learners of Spanish using the state of Florida as an example of how states implement policies in a decentralized government structure. In the case of the US, a small portion of federal funding flows into the state, and local school districts use follow state guidelines and laws to implement local policies. The decentralized structure in which states determine and set educational programs, policies, and practices is meant to allow states the flexibility they need to respond to local demographics and needs. However, although there are nearly 300,000 identified English learning students in the state of Florida, with the vast majority Spanish speakers, the state maintains an English-as-official-language stance, which underscores the politically conservative position of unifying people through a misconceived "one language—one state" policy (Fishman, 1991). The policy further advances the nation's English-only narratives as demonstrated in the subtractive orientations of the language-in-education policies. Thus, there are ongoing tensions between the building of linguistic resources through personnel, methodology, and curriculum policies and state financial support to do so.

Moreover, Florida demonstrates how curriculum policy can be additive or subtractive, depending on whether Spanish-speaking children will receive support for their home language in Early Head Start, Head Start, or kindergarten programs. The general position and orientation of the state is on English language acquisition, a subtractive learning policy. Yet despite the state's stance that English is the official language, Spanish is increasingly being used in schools, as larger numbers of school districts in the state experience the benefit of TWI and additive bilingual education programs for Spanish- and English-speaking students. A major challenge to this growth is the limited number of certified teachers who can provide academic instruction through Spanish into the middle elementary (primary) grades. Furthermore, limited resources are provided to teach content areas in Spanish or promote children's bilingual development, but this can vary tremendously across the state's 67 school districts.

Thus, as this chapter demonstrates and argues, personnel, methodology, and curriculum policies are deeply intertwined and difficult to distill, as each affects the

other. Personnel policies that include preparing highly qualified teachers and educators (such as bilingual paraprofessionals, early childhood educators, and caregivers) must insist on professional knowledge of the relationship between first and second language acquisition theories. The more educators understand and build upon young learners' first languages, the stronger students' long-term learning outcomes. The methods used by educators that build on early oracy for first and second language literacy should also include contrastive linguistics for Spanish and English; indeed, young bilinguals benefit directly from this metalinguistic knowledge (Coady & Ariza, 2010; Coady et al., 2019b). Finally, the degree to which curriculum policies reflect and affirm students' identities—including their language and cultural identities—will further reveal how successful early language learning is and can be. These three areas—preparation, implementation, and access—are clearly interrelated to support early language learning and literacy. What is clear from this chapter is that local language-in-education policies are embedded in larger narratives at the state and national levels in the US. This creates friction for speakers of Spanish in the state who aim to maintain and build the home language.

## Implications

Spanish speakers continue to be the largest minoritized language group in the US but continue to face among the lowest rate of educational attainment or school readiness owing to the minimal support provided to young learners of Spanish and access to native early language learner programs (Figueras-Daniel & Barnett, 2013). Our review of curriculum, methodology, and personnel policies in the US using the example of the state of Florida has the following implications. First, systematic survey data of children's home languages and bilingual programs or instruction should be provided by the state with data collected on the types of methodology, personnel, and curriculum policies used and desired. High-quality early childhood education and early bilingual development are known to predict students' academic achievement in later years (Nores et al., 2018). However, language policies regarding young bilingual learners' equitable access to early childhood education remain limited in Spanish relative to the number of speakers. In particular, state-level datasets do not provide enrollment data on children's home languages or the DL programs in each school district. Even when considering early bilingual learners between kindergarten and grade 2, systematic data that would elucidate how DL or bilingual education is provided to young learners of Spanish, data are limited or absent altogether.

Second, high-quality curriculum and support for bilingual instruction in pre-K through early elementary grades are needed. Comprehensive policies and curriculum with research-based resources and professional development can further support young learners of Spanish in the US (Nores et al., 2018)—that is, for both native and nonnative Spanish speakers. For example, despite Florida's effort to provide preschool education to young learners of Spanish through programs such as

VPK, School Readiness Program, Head Start, and preschool education, those programs are organized separately from the public kindergarten through elementary grade (grade 5 or 6) education. These separate policies between pre-K and grade 2 impose challenges with respect to providing high-quality and consistent educational programs for young learners of Spanish. In the US, federal policies toward young learners of Spanish, that is, both English speakers learning Spanish and native Spanish-speaking children, remain embedded in a national narrative that positions Spanish as an inferior, racialized language but, as Valdés (1997) predicted two decades ago, a desirable and economically advantageous language for speakers of English to learn.

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# Chapter 12

## Early Mandarin Learning in South America: Present and Future Directions



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**Abstract** The present chapter proceeds from the analysis of language education policies at the state level to the description of program implementation in elementary schools, with a focus on teaching Mandarin at the early grades in three countries: Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. Since there is a lack of specific guidelines for Mandarin teaching at the state level in all three countries, the chapter focuses on issues of access policy—following the framework provided by Kaplan and Baldauf (Language-in-education policy and planning. In: Hinkel E (ed) Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning. Lawrence Erlbaum, pp 1013–1034, 2005)—describing the efforts made at schools and institutions to provide programs at the primary school level (students of 6–12 years of age) and the rationale to implement them from an early age (kindergarten and first grade). The conclusion presents the common characteristics of programs in all three countries and reflects on the articulation of such programs with language-in-education policies. A final analysis, following a bottom-up approach to language planning, opens up to suggestions about orientations and guidelines for the teaching and learning of Mandarin in South America.

**Keywords** Early Mandarin learning · Argentina · Paraguay · Chile · Language-in-education policies · Access policy

Several countries in South America (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay) have issued policies endorsing foreign language learning at the primary and secondary school levels. Some of them, like Brazil and Chile, explicitly indicate English as the language to be taught. In cases where no

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specific language is mandated, English is nevertheless the one chosen over other foreign languages. However, learning English in the early grades in public schools—preprimary and first through third grades—is far from being a common phenomenon. Most countries make it mandatory from the fourth or fifth grade of elementary school and for the secondary level. This is compounded by the fact that “the participation in English classes is not tracked in a systematic manner across countries in Latin America and the information available is often incomplete, inaccessible, or outdated” (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2017, p. xx). Private schools and institutions, on the other hand, usually offer foreign language, i.e., English, as part of their curriculum from kindergarten.

In contrast to the tradition and developments of teaching and learning English within the public and private education realms, Mandarin Chinese has just recently—since the mid-1990s—gained momentum. The emergence of China as a key economic and political player in the international arena, coupled with the strengthening of commercial and diplomatic relations with Latin America, have stimulated interest in Chinese language and culture. The demand for opportunities to learn Mandarin have consequently grown exponentially in the region during the last two decades. However, most of that growth has taken place at the tertiary and university levels, private academies and language schools with programs and courses for adult students. Mandarin Chinese is the foreign language that is chosen in a limited number of public and private schools, and mostly at the secondary level.

Nevertheless, Mandarin teaching and learning at early ages has a longer history related to Chinese immigrant communities—with the first waves coming mainly from Taiwan in the 1980s, and later from the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—that established schools for the maintenance of the language in the young generations, as a first or heritage language (Bai, 2002; Bogado Bordazar, 2002; Gao, 2012, 2017; Mazza, 2016). Some of these schools were created as bilingual private institutions aligned with primary and secondary education programs in different countries. Others were established as Saturday schools, devoted to the teaching and learning of the Mandarin language to school-age children of Chinese families.

## **Mandarin in Three South American Countries**

The present chapter proceeds from the analysis of language education policies at the state level to the description of program implementation in elementary schools, with a focus on teaching Mandarin at the early grades in three countries: Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. These countries were chosen on the basis of access to direct information and the opportunity to contrast and compare among their language policies and current situation surrounding Mandarin teaching and learning.

In addition to a review of each of the aforementioned countries’ policies (MINCYT, 2006; MINEDUC, 2011; MEC, 1998), the study also collects information provided by two other relevant sources: individual interviews to key players in language education developments at the Ministry of Education level and

testimonies of school authorities and teachers involved in the implementation of Mandarin learning programs in connection with curriculum, materials, and personnel for the early grades, in both state and private schools.

In the description of the Mandarin teaching situation in Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay, we address the three key components of language policy identified by Spolsky: language practice, language beliefs, and management. For the first component, we present the general ecology of languages in each country and focus on the recent growth of Mandarin teaching in Argentina and Chile due to the increase in immigration and in commercial and political ties with the PRC. In Paraguay, the shrinking of the Taiwanese community explains the decline in interest in a language once seen as a powerful economic and social asset that has, nevertheless, retained its role as a heritage and identity badge. We also consider beliefs that have moved institutions and individuals to adopt Mandarin as their foreign language, despite the fact that those beliefs do not appear to translate into policy. In terms of management, we mostly address issues at the local and individual level, since state policies do not yet provide guidelines either for the teaching of foreign languages at the early grades or for the specific inclusion of Mandarin as one of the languages of choice for institutions and curriculum.

Since Mandarin teaching does not have state-level provisions in any of the three countries, the chapter focuses on some of the issues behind policy goals that could influence language-in-education policy driven development, according to the framework provided by Kaplan and Baldauf (2005, p. 609): access, personnel, curriculum, materials, resourcing, and community. It describes the efforts made at schools and institutions to provide programs at the primary school level (students 6–12 years of age) and the rationale to implement them from an early age (kindergarten and first grade). In the particular case of Argentina, examples will be drawn from state schools that run intensive Mandarin programs starting in the first grade and from a two-way bilingual Mandarin-Spanish elementary school, unique in its kind in the region (Banfi et al., 2016). In Chile, a few elementary schools teach Mandarin from kindergarten. As for Paraguay, examples come from private institutions, most of them supported by the Chinese community in the country.

In the conclusion, the comparison serves to highlight some of the issues of access, resources, personnel, and community that deserve further attention for the development and implementation of an encompassing policy for early language learning in each of the three countries.

## **Argentina's Language-in-Education Planning and Policy: A Brief Overview**

Spanish is the *de facto* official language of the country, dominant in all public and private sectors, including the education system. At the same time, the teaching and learning of foreign languages can be traced back to the colonial period. For instance,

in 1801, the members of the Cabildo of Buenos Aires remarked the importance of teaching French in the public schools. In the nineteenth century, Argentina received millions of immigrants, coming mainly from Italy (around 3 million) and Spain (2 million), but also from France, Poland, Russia, Turkey, German, Portugal, and Great Britain, among other European countries (Bein, 2014). In 1884, a law was passed (No. 1420) to make elementary school “compulsory, free and gradual” with the goal of forging an Argentine identity, on the belief that through education, immigrants would be integrated into society culturally, socially, and economically, under the ideology of “one country, one language” (Di Tullio, 2003, p. 15). The law established the “national language” as a compulsory subject, which was not spelled out but assumed to be Spanish.

In the nineteenth century, French and English, along with Latin and Classical Greek, were part of the curriculum at public secondary schools. French and English were prestige languages, associated with European nations greatly admired and viewed as cultural beacons by the social and intellectual elites. From 1904, different foreign language teacher training colleges were created to give “European” instruction to the ruling classes (Bein, 2017). The same year, 1904, a presidential decree created the first public institution at the tertiary level, Instituto Lenguas Vivas, to train foreign language teachers in English and French. Since the Instituto also had elementary and secondary schools, it was the first to teach foreign languages at the elementary school level where their own trainees could implement their practices. The Lenguas Vivas was, therefore, a pioneer in early language teaching and learning, but it was an isolated example. Gradually, more and more schools opted for English and French; very few schools chose Portuguese, Italian, or German. In other words, English and French retained their status as marks of “true” education and access to the world of culture and distinction over the proximity of the Portuguese speakers of Brazil or the strong Italian and German heritage proven by the number of bilingual homes in those languages in the first half of the twentieth century.

The year 1942 marked a turning point, as a presidential decree gave precedence to English instruction and ruled the teaching of French and Italian for shorter periods within the education system. The decree was replaced in 1988 by a ministerial resolution (No. 1813), according to which only one foreign language was to be taught at the secondary school level. The resolution did not explicitly name the language, but suggested French, English, and Italian, leaving the final decision to school principals. Most of the schools opted for English (Bein, 2017), following the global trend of viewing it as the language of opportunities for individuals in the economic, social, and professional realms.

As for early language learning, it was only present in private schools founded by immigrant communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their bilingual curriculum replicated the ones from schools in their countries of origin (Banfi & Ray, 2005). St. Andrew’s Scots School (English), founded in 1838, was the first; in 1897, a German school was established; in 1927, the Instituto Privado Argentino Japonés (Japanese) was launched; and in 1937 the Instituto Tomás Devoto (Italian) opened. These schools considered Spanish as the second language of students, and it was taught beginning at the kindergarten level.



Foreign language teaching and learning became compulsory in state-run primary schools in 1998, beginning in the fourth grade. In 2001, the city of Buenos Aires, following a plurilingual policy, opened the first “plurilingual school,” establishing a curriculum policy for teaching languages at an early age. Students start learning their first foreign language from first grade until seventh grade at the elementary school level, and when they reach fourth grade, a second foreign language class is added. Until 2019, 26 public schools in the city are plurilingual. In 2009, the city of Buenos Aires took a further step and expanded the teaching of foreign languages from the first grade onward in all public schools, giving the schools different options and curriculum paths. English predominates, being taught in 98% of public institutions, followed by Italian, French, Portuguese, or German in the remaining schools. The policy for access to early language is limited to the city’s jurisdiction, and there are some guidelines on curriculum.

Mandarin was recently added as an option for several elementary schools in the city. The schools’ decision reflected the growing demand for learning the language, owing to the increase of Chinese immigration and the preeminence of the PRC in the global scenario, which, as noted earlier, fueled interest in Mandarin language and culture. Chinese teaching in the public schools begins, therefore, at an early age, following one of the principles (“starting early”) at the base of the city’s language policy principles and strengthening the others: linguistic richness, strategy value, diversity of options, teacher instruction and training, and evaluation and innovation (Educational Planning Division, 2010, p. 5).

## Mandarin Chinese in Argentina

Chan’s *Power Language Index* (2016) ranks languages based on five types of benefits: (a) geography or the ability to travel; (b) economy or the ability to participate in the global economy; (c) communication or the ability to engage in international dialogue; (d) knowledge and media or the ability to consume these resources; and (e) diplomacy or the ability to engage in international relations. According to the index, Mandarin Chinese is in second place. Many of the benefits indicated by Chan have become tangible in relation to the Mandarin language, in part due to the growing economic and political influence of China in the global arena. In recent decades, those benefits have gained visibility in the belief system of individuals, and the interest in learning Mandarin has risen accordingly.

Mandarin Chinese teaching started a little less than two decades ago at the university and tertiary levels, where language courses are mostly extracurricular and optional. More than the presence of a fairly numerous Chinese community with whom to interact, particularly in the city, the interest of individuals in learning Chinese followed a gradual change in beliefs, since the rise of China as a world power and a strong business partner in the region caused Mandarin to be viewed as an instrument of economic advancement. In 2004, it was added to the foreign language courses offered at one of the oldest and most prestigious language teacher

training colleges in Buenos Aires. Since then, official and unofficial institutions have been offering Mandarin Chinese to adults.

Following the path opened by courses for adults, in 2011 Mandarin was included as an option at the secondary level in public schools in the city of Buenos Aires, which paved the way for different elite private secondary schools to offer Mandarin Chinese as a third foreign language. At present, Mandarin Chinese is offered at the university level in different provinces in Argentina: Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, San Juan, Salta, and Córdoba. Mandarin Chinese at the secondary school level is concentrated in the area of Buenos Aires province and the city of Buenos Aires.

As for early learning, the teaching of Mandarin Chinese was confined to the Chinese community in Buenos Aires. In the 1970s and 1980s, new waves of immigrants from Taiwan arrived in Argentina in search of a better life; some had left for political reasons, others to leave behind traditional ties (Grimson et al., 2016). Saturday community schools opened in 1973 and 1986, teaching Chinese to students from 3 years of age to secondary school age. Chinese was taught as a mother tongue, and the books were provided yearly by the Overseas Community Affairs Council of Taiwan, something that also occurs in Paraguay. For reading and writing, traditional characters were taught along with *zhuyin fuhao*, the phonetic system used in Taiwan. In other words, the curriculum was not designed locally but adopted from abroad. Most teachers were native speakers, but very few were trained as language teachers. The purpose of these schools was to maintain the students' mother tongue, and many students among the first cohorts of graduates were able to pursue university studies in Taiwan. Since there is no specific linguistic policy in Argentina on the maintenance of heritage languages, these schools were possible because of Taiwan's policy for residents abroad that mandated the provision of materials (text-books) and addressed personnel issues for schools that would allow Taiwanese citizens and descendants to continue with their education in Mandarin. The policy also arranged for visits of native teachers from Taiwan every 2 years.

From 1990 to the first years of the twenty-first century, a large wave of immigrants came from mainland China, most of them young people from southern, lower-income cities (Grimson et al., 2016). Children from this immigrant community went to the Taiwanese Saturday schools, which by 2000 were four in number, located in different neighborhoods of the city of Buenos Aires. In these schools, since kindergarten, newly arrived Chinese speaking children shared the class with second-generation toddlers from Taiwanese bilingual parents whose first language was Spanish.

It was not until 2008 that the first community Saturday School for immigrants from the PRC opened. As in the Taiwanese example, once again not only access but also materials were available due to the external agency of the Chinese Embassy in Argentina. For reading and writing, simplified characters were taught along with the *hanyu pinyin*. The school was open on Saturdays, but the rapid increase in the number of students made it necessary to add classes on Sunday. The teachers were mainly native speakers, and very few are trained in teaching language; some are university students, and others are spouses of employees of Chinese companies deployed to Argentina.

Besides these examples of community-driven, unofficial schools, early Chinese learning is currently offered as well in a few public and private schools. The city of Buenos Aires is considered a pioneer in this region of South America by implementing the teaching of foreign languages from first grade beginning in 2009, as mentioned earlier. Five years later, the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires decided to create a Mandarin-Spanish bilingual public elementary school. The decision was in part driven by the rising interest in China in society, as a way of giving children of low and middle to low socioeconomic status access to a distinctive instrument of advancement by knowing a less commonly taught language, i.e., Mandarin. At the same time, it provides official recognition of the language and culture of a community with a growing economic and social participation in the life of the city. The Direction of Languages in Education of the Ministry suggested adopting a two-way bilingual model that had no precedents in the country and the region, but for which the conditions were ripe. The consistent flow of Chinese immigrants would ensure the balanced enrollment of native speakers of both languages, and the support for this project from China's government through its Embassy in Argentina would aid in the operational aspects of the implementation.

In September of 2014, the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires signed a cooperation agreement with the Beijing Municipal Commission of Education. The agreement stipulated that Buenos Aires would provide the building, the personnel, and all the resources needed to run a school, and Beijing would supply materials and the know-how through trained professionals and teaching materials for the Mandarin part of the curriculum. It was also established that Dong Cheng District N°109 school in Beijing, a school that teaches Spanish as the second foreign language after English from second grade on—would be the sister school of the bilingual school in Buenos Aires (N°28 School in the fifth District); the sisterhood would allow the schools to share their teaching experiences, pedagogies, and materials. The mediation of the Chinese Embassy in Argentina was crucial for the signing of the agreement and for promoting the school within the Chinese community in Buenos Aires. In 2014, the program began with two groups of 5-year-old kindergarteners; in 2015, the primary school started with two first-grade classes. Every year, one grade is added, in order to guarantee resources and planning; by 2021, two classes of seventh grade will open to complete the first cohort.

The school, as noted earlier, is a unique example in our country and in the region, created without any specific legislation for the maintenance of the mother tongue of immigrant communities and for the teaching of Mandarin Chinese at an early age. Nevertheless, a resolution from the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires (RS-2015-1221-MEGC) created this program, with its particular bilingual model, and mandates the design and implementation of a specific curriculum for this school: *Bases Curriculares Escuela Bilingüe Argentino-China* (Ministerio de Educación de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 2016). Both Spanish and Mandarin Chinese are instructional languages: academic contents are taught in Spanish and Chinese following an articulated curriculum, in agreement with the learning goals for all students in the city and the country. Every class has a team of two teachers,

one a Spanish-speaking teacher and the other a Mandarin-speaking teacher. Teachers plan the class together and take turns teaching content.

Because this is a public school, personnel policies must comply with the requirements set by the Ministry of Education. Spanish-speaking teachers are from the regular listing of elementary school teachers. For Mandarin-speaking teachers, there is no Chinese primary school teacher training college in Argentina; the credentials of teachers with degrees from China or Taiwan are not valid in Argentina. Therefore, an entry exam was specially designed to prove their qualifications for teaching both Chinese language and the elementary school curriculum or, better, to teach the elementary school curriculum through Mandarin. However, there are no current provisions for the training of teachers, both Spanish and Mandarin speakers, in those theoretical and practical matters that are essential to bilingual teaching from an early age.

The city's Ministry of Education has created a specific resource for the school by appointing a team of specialists in bilingualism, the Chinese language, Spanish as a second teaching language, and curriculum planning to provide in-service training to teachers and directives through regular workshops and meetings. Due to the scarcity of specific teaching material in Mandarin for this particular context, the team also works with teachers in coming up with content and designing lessons and activities. The goals of the immersion model are to foster bilingualism and biliteracy, enhance awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity, and, through instruction in two languages, foster high levels of academic achievement. To reach these goals, the training of school personnel is ongoing and intense. However, there are no special monetary allocations or provisions beyond those that apply to any other public school in the city, with the sole exception of the advising team of specialists.

Two additional examples of early Chinese teaching as a foreign language are presented in what follows. One is a public school located in the Belgrano neighborhood (Escuela Normal N°10, Tenth School District), which is located close to Chinatown in Buenos Aires. The school added Mandarin to the foreign language courses due to community demand. In 2015, an extra period of Mandarin Chinese classes was added to one of the two first grade groups; since 2019, Mandarin Chinese has been taught from the first to the fifth grade. Enrollment has doubled, since many Chinese families choose the school to allow their children to maintain and further develop the home language. The second example is a private Spanish-English bilingual school, the Lincoln School. In 2014, the school began offering one weekly period of Mandarin Chinese, with no further goal than to give children exposure to the language. Nowadays, Mandarin Chinese has been added as a third language and it is taught as a foreign language in kindergarten and primary and secondary grades.

All three examples are drawn from the city of Buenos Aires, where a recent policy on foreign language teaching has led to both starting language learning at an earlier age and incorporating less commonly taught languages such as Mandarin Chinese. The city is also a pioneer in the country and in the region for implementing a two-way bilingual program in the public school system, an initiative that may inspire similar programs in other provinces and Spanish-speaking nations. However,

such a policy addresses mainly issues of access and leaves ample scope for clear guidelines in terms of curriculum and resources.

## **Chile's Language-in-Education Policy and Planning: A Brief Overview**

Spanish is the *de facto* official language of Chile, since there are no *de jure* provisions related to linguistic practices and rights, either in the constitution or in the legal corpus of the country. In this regard, the linguistic policy of Chile, in terms of use and distribution of languages, agrees with a *laissez-faire* approach, which usually favors the status of the dominant language. However, despite the fact of practically nonexistent language planning and policy legislation (Leclerc, 2015; Sliashynskaya, 2019), several indigenous languages spoken in the territory—Aymara, Huilliche, Kunza, Mapudungun, Qawasqar, Quechua, Rapa Nui, and Yamana—were recognized by the 1993 Indigenous Peoples Law. In 2010, the recognition extended to Chilean Sign Language in Article 26 of Law 20.422 that guarantees equal opportunities and social inclusion to people with disabilities.

In the years following the 1993 law, the country has made some efforts to protect and maintain indigenous languages: Articles 29 and 30—on the primary and secondary levels, respectively—of the 2009 General Education Law provide that “in the case of educational establishments with a high percentage of indigenous students, it will be considered also a general objective that the students learn that which will allow them to understand different types of oral and written texts, and to express orally in their indigenous language.” [En el caso de los establecimientos educacionales con alto porcentaje de alumnos indígenas, se considerará, además, como objetivo general, que los alumnos y alumnas desarrollen los aprendizajes que les permitan comprender diversos tipos de textos orales y escritos, y expresarse en forma oral en su lengua indígena.]<sup>1</sup> Decree 280 of September 2009 details the main objectives and contents for the learning of indigenous languages, in articulation with the main objectives and contents of the primary education general curriculum from grades 1 to 8. The same decree explains that the program can be implemented by any school interested in fostering intercultural principles, beginning at grade 1. However, participation in this program is elective, depending on the choice of students and families, as expressed in Article 4. In other words, the policy recognizes the right of communities to learn their languages but leaves it to the “simple management of individuals,” with the main objective of “change of beliefs” more than of “providing situations for language learning” (Spolsky, 2014, p. xv). Therefore, this provision for the teaching and learning of indigenous languages is practically the only one within the scope of educational policies that refers to an early age starting point (grade 1, i.e., 6 years old) and raises language policy issues of status

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<sup>1</sup>All translations from Spanish are undertaken by the authors.

and acquisition. Something similar happened in the Chilean context with the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education launched a program, English Opens Doors, to promote the acquisition of English proficiency in the years of compulsory education. The status of English as the lingua franca of the global community was at the base of the program's implementation, following the general lines of the policy and the curriculum where foreign language learning is implicitly equated with English learning. The program was created by decree (No. 81) with the specific aim of improving the level of English, but it brings about as a consequence the definition of English learning national standards and the necessity of teaching training and support for the implementation of the program at the classroom level (International Network for Language Education Policy Studies, 2013). However, the program does not contemplate early language learning, and its curriculum and implementation applies from the fifth grade of elementary school to the last year of high school. Therefore, in terms of early language policy, indigenous languages are the only ones for which objectives and contents are defined in the law from the first grade on.

## Chinese, the Language of the Twenty-First Century

As noted in the introduction, the prominence gained by the PRC on the global scene has clearly spurred an increase in the interest for its language and culture in Chile, as has occurred in Argentina. Such interest has also been fueled by a politically and economically motivated desire to strengthen ties with the PRC. For example, Chilean President Bachelet, in a speech given during the visit of China's President Xi Jinping in 2017, affirmed that "Chinese is the language in which big topics of the XXI century will be discussed" (Bahya, 2017), words that we paraphrase in the heading of this section.

In addition, Chile has had long-standing political, economic, and cultural ties to China. It was the first country in Latin America to establish official diplomatic relations with China in 1971, although the first attempts date as far back as 1905 (Gómez Fiedler, 2013). Trade and economic exchanges became regular (mainly in salt and copper) in the early 1960s. More recently, Chile was the first country to sign a free trade agreement with China in 2005, and since 2009 China has been its main commercial partner. Mirroring, and fostered by, the economic exchange, several education and culture agreements were signed by 2015. That year, Chile was chosen to host the First Regional Center of the Confucius Institute in Latin America (CRICAL), which oversees the functioning of the 29 Confucius Institutes distributed over different countries in the region. The two institutes established in Chile as well as the CRICAL have, among other activities, Mandarin Chinese culture and language courses, mostly for university-age students or older, and sometimes they guide the implementation of Mandarin classes in secondary municipal schools. The Confucius Institute housed in the Pontificia Universidad Católica participates in a special program designed by the university to serve underprivileged talented children and



young students, offering them scholarships and regular Chinese courses but starting from grade 6.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education began designing a plan for teaching and learning Chinese similar to the English Opens Doors (Inglés Abre Puertas) program. Loyal to that model, the plan was proposed for secondary school students but constituted the first project at the national level to teach Chinese designed, promoted, and supported by a governmental institution, i.e., the Ministry of Education. The funding and implementation of the project depend on the National Ministry of Education, local municipalities, and the Office of Chinese Language International (Hanban) affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education.

The program gained stronger momentum during the Bachelet administration. In 2008, a new name was adopted temporarily for the English Opens Doors program “Language Opens Doors” (Idioma Abre Puertas) so that it included other languages, but the language remained principally Mandarin Chinese. An agreement was signed between this program and the Embassy of the PRC to provide personnel resources to the school: one trained teacher, responsible for Mandarin classes at all levels, would come from China, and his or her position was renewed every 2 years. The Chinese teachers would receive local training and be in charge of developing and implementing a curriculum for the secondary level that aims at teaching Mandarin through culture. Today, the Mandarin teaching program is featured on the Ministry of Education webpage as an initiative that gives students the opportunity to learn a second foreign language after English.

To implement the program, schools interested in including Chinese in their curriculum apply to the Ministry of Education requesting personnel resources. The ministry sends the applications to Hanban, where they are evaluated and approved after a review of the institution, including conditions there. Hanban pays for trips for teachers from China to visit Chile; the Ministry of Education is in charge of delivering them to the institution, and municipalities take care of lodging and salaries. Classes are periodically observed by Hanban’s evaluators, who report to Hanban and to the Chilean Ministry of Education. Therefore, Chile’s management of the Chinese language in their educational institutions is strongly determined by the support and funding from the PRC government and Hanban with respect to personnel, methodology, resources, and evaluation policies and practices. It may be said that the implementation of such a program reflects the strategic interest of China in establishing a major presence in Chile and also the economic and commercial advantage that such a partnership represents for this South American country.

The result of the program has been the expansion of Chinese teaching and learning to a still growing number of mainly secondary schools that by 2016 numbered 18 in total (Cornejo, 2018). Institutions, however, are free to decide the grade at which Chinese courses will be incorporated and the compulsory or elective nature of such courses. Of these institutions, two schools have compulsory Mandarin learning in their curriculum from kindergarten or first grade and throughout the elementary school years: Los Trigales in Temuco, in the Araucanía Region, and the Colegio Yangtsé in Santiago, the capital city. At Los Trigales, English and Mapudungun are taught from kindergarten as compulsory subjects, going beyond



the mandate of the policy discussed earlier for which indigenous languages such as Mapudungun are optional. Mandarin Chinese was added in 2004 as an extracurricular and elective course, due to the presence of students of Chinese heritage and as a way to expand the cultural horizons of their entire community. Later, Chinese became a compulsory foreign language, with courses taught by a Chinese teacher, with resources provided by the Chinese Ministry of Education according to the aforementioned agreement signed with the Ministry of Education of Chile. The materials used for teaching Chinese are scarce, and the training of the teachers is also limited. In a personal interview, Karina Piña, former director of the English Opens Doors program at the Ministry of Education of Chile, attributed the richness of this program to its concomitancy with one foreign and one indigenous language, allowing students to make cross-linguistic and translinguistic connections, particularly between Mapudungun and Mandarin.

The other school, the Colegio Yangtsé, is the oldest Mandarin teaching institution in Chile. It started in 1972 as Escuela Chile Nuevo to serve the poverty-stricken community of La Reina. In 1981, the Ministry of Education handed over the administration of the school to the municipality of La Reina. In 1987, the school received the sponsorship of the Embassy of the PRC, and it was renamed Colegio Yangtsé, in honor of the longest Chinese river. Since then, the school has organized activities and events to promote Chinese culture and foster cultural exchange with China. Since April 2008, it has been the only Chilean institution offering Mandarin classes to all students, from kindergarten to eighth grade.

However, Los Trigales and Colegio Yangtsé appear to be the exceptions to the rule in implementing early language learning in their classrooms. Teaching and learning Chinese from kindergarten in these institutions fall under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education's initiative and enjoy strong and active support from the Chinese government, but no specific regulations govern its development and implementation. Nevertheless, they serve as examples for a policy that not only promotes the early learning of Chinese but may also prompt the expansion of an English program, which already has more detailed access, curriculum, and resources policies, at earlier grades.

## **Paraguay's Language-in-Education Policy and Planning: A Brief Overview**

Paraguay has both Spanish and Guaraní as official languages and is the only bilingual country in the region. In 1992, the constitution declared in its Article 140 that "Paraguay is a pluricultural and bilingual country. The official languages are Spanish and Guaraní. The law will establish the modalities for the usage of both." The article also recognized other indigenous languages—the Ethnologue webpage mentions up to 19—as the national patrimony. It is an exceptional example of a country that has conferred to an indigenous language a status equal to that of Spanish at the national

level, which has also resulted in Guaraní being the only indigenous language in South America spoken by a large number of nonindigenous citizens.

The first bilingual education program was introduced at the elementary level in 1983. The model adopted aimed to “castellanizar” (hispanicize) Guaraní; Guaraní was used at the beginning of the year to support the learning of Spanish and was discontinued in the later grades. This program resulted in a higher rate of grade retention and student dropouts and in a general decline of student performance. In view of this, the educational reform that took place as part of the democratization process initiated in 1989 after the end of Stroessner’s dictatorial regime proposed a bilingual education program for the maintenance of the mother tongue with the gradual, systematic incorporation of the second language, but with no detriment to first language development. Guaraní and Spanish both became languages of instruction in all areas of the curriculum (Corvalán, 1995; Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2006). In addition to the aforementioned Article 140 of the constitution, Article 77 establishes an access policy principle for early education in either language based on the right to maintain and be alphabetized in the mother tongue. However, such a right appears to be restricted to speakers of either of the official languages. This policy was ratified in the 2010 *Ley de Lenguas* 4251, whose Article 26 extends the “literacy in the mother tongue” to speakers of other national indigenous languages: “The boy and girl who inhabit the national territory have the right to receive initial education in their mother tongue, provided that it is one of the official languages of the State. Indigenous peoples will use their respective languages in the initial stage of school education. The other cultural communities will opt for one of the official languages.” The same spirit for extending rights and maintaining languages inspired Article 12 of the law, which states: “The indigenous peoples who inhabit the national territory have the right to receive support from the State to guarantee the survival and functionality of their languages and cultures, as a means to strengthen their ethnic identity.”

The *Ley de Lenguas* (2010) also makes provisions for other language communities in Articles 11 and 13, as follows:

Art. 11: Community collective linguistic rights. These are linguistic rights of the various cultural communities:

1. Being recognized as members of a different linguistic community
2. Maintaining the language and culture of their people
3. Associating with other members of their own linguistic community for the defense and promotion of their own language and culture
4. Collaborating with members of the national community regarding cross-border complications

Art. 13. On nonindigenous cultural minorities. Nonindigenous cultural communities have the right to have facilities to access knowledge and use of the official languages of the republic, without losing the right to use their respective languages.

As a continuation of the expansion of bilingual education policies initiated by the 2010 Ley de Lenguas, in 2017 the Ministry of Education and Sciences approved the National Plan for Bilingual Education. The National Commission of Bilingualism elaborated the plan, in collaboration with the Ministry and the Secretariat of Linguistic Policy, as a normative document. The implementation will be gradual until 2030, when it is expected to be functioning in every school at all levels of the education system. The plan includes all indigenous languages, and its goal is to develop the languages as expressions of culture and as valuable resources. It is expected that such development will also improve the quality of education, foster respect for other cultures, and create more inclusive classrooms (*La Nación*, 2015).

With regard to the language-in-education policy as it relates to foreign languages, as in the case of Argentina and Chile, English occupies a privileged position. In Paraguay, however, the teaching and learning of English start at first grade, according to the curricular guidelines and program description provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The reason given for the early start of the program is to “make possible the true learning of the language, at a level that will allow communicating with any native speaker” (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura, 2012, p. 33). The program is implemented in more than a hundred public schools, but not in all of them.

## **Chinese Diaspora and Community-Driven Mandarin Learning**

Paraguay has had a long and varied immigration history owing to the flexibility of its migration policies, among other factors. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigrants from Europe and Asia arrived and made important contributions to the economic and social development of the country. Owing to the close diplomatic relations between Paraguay and Taiwan, in the 1970s and 1980s many Taiwanese immigrated. During President Lee’s visit to Paraguay in 1997, it was estimated that there were about 8000 Taiwanese immigrants in Paraguay, most of whom were involved in business and imports and exports (*Noticias de Taiwán*, 1997). From an ethnic point of view, Taiwan was basically the only representative of Chinese culture for some time. Note that diplomacy not only allowed the community to sign agreements at the economic level, but also opened doors to the education sector (Pinheiro-Machado, 2010). Thus, this economic and cultural interplay shaped the view of the Chinese language as an asset to maintain for business advantages and for cultural ties with their homeland.

Teaching and learning Chinese was, from the beginning, a community initiative to maintain the Chinese language and buttress Chinese identity, both rights later recognized in 2010 by the Ley de Lenguas. In 1983, the Confucius Cultural Center in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, officially opened its doors, and Chinese language education became its responsibility. The initial enrollment of 90 students

almost tripled within a year. In 1985, an educational committee from the center applied to become an officially recognized education alternative, as an indirect means of more closely integrating into society without forfeiting the community's culture and language.

In 1986, after acquiring a new building, the Confucius Cultural Center was admitted as an official educational institution. It changed its name to Private School Chiang Kai Shek (巴拉圭 中正 學校), starting with classrooms from the preschool and initial levels to the end of middle school (6 years of elementary school and 3 of middle school). In 1987, they opened the program up to the remaining 3 years of high school. The institution had a bilingual modality: they accepted Spanish speaking and non-Spanish-speaking students from the community, holding classes in both languages throughout the different levels. Kindergarten had 6 lecture hours of Spanish and 3 of Chinese per day; the elementary level had the same hour distribution of both languages, but Guaraní hours were added to comply with the national bilingual guidelines. In middle school, from seventh to ninth grade, English was added as a foreign language at the expense of an hour less of Chinese. Presently, the school does not offer Chinese classes at the high school level. Chiang Kai Shek school also offers the more traditional Saturday school, where children from Chinese-speaking families, from elementary to high school ages, learn Mandarin (4 hours) and math (4 hours) using materials from Taiwan.

Other examples could be drawn from Ciudad del Este, where Chinese teaching and learning have not acquired an official status and do not comply with official guidelines. The Chinese community in Ciudad del Este is characterized as valuing the maintenance of their language and culture as distinctive identity traits. Two institutions are devoted to teaching and learning Mandarin from an early age that offer extracurricular, 3-hour lessons every day (Pinheiro-Machado, 2010). In addition, Colegio Dr. Sun Yet Sen (中山 僑 校), with classes from kindergarten to high school, whose degrees are certified by the Overseas Community Affairs Council of Taiwan, allows its graduates to continue university studies in Taiwan.

About 91% of the Chinese people in Ciudad del Este are from Taiwan, so in terms of "overseas" Chinese education, both materials and personnel resources are supported by the Taiwanese government and other institutions. Most teachers are local, but they are trained biannually by colleagues brought in from Taiwan. In recent years, due to Paraguay's economic instability, many of them have emigrated to other countries, such as the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Mexico, or returned to their homeland, Taiwan. Therefore, of the four schools that opened in the early twentieth century, only two remain functioning.

Most of the examples of early Mandarin learning in Paraguay involve private institutions supported by the community and the Taiwanese government. Since the community is getting smaller, the expansion of early Mandarin teaching and learning practices will have to find inspiration in the strong language policies for indigenous languages and, more recently, for English as a foreign language.

## Conclusion

We have described the general linguistic policies and specific provisions for both Chinese and early Chinese learning in Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. Here in the conclusion, we would like to address the similarities and differences among the three countries, around issues of access, curriculum, personnel, materials, resources, and community policies.

All three countries have advanced their language policies in the past three decades by recognizing indigenous languages and their right to be maintained and used. Although not mentioned previously, Argentina did this also in the 2006 *Ley de Educación Nacional* No. 26206, in Article 52, which declares intercultural bilingual education as the modality to be implemented from preschool to secondary levels that will allow indigenous communities to preserve and strengthen their culture, language, and identity. These policies alone explicitly provide for the teaching and learning of languages at the beginning of elementary school, with more or less explicit guidelines for their implementation. Paraguay has the most detailed access and curriculum policies, due in part to being an officially bilingual country in Spanish and Guaraní, an indigenous language.

In contrast, foreign language teaching and learning are included as a compulsory subject in the curriculum from the fourth or fifth grade, although lately Paraguay and Argentina have made efforts to implement some policy with respect to accessing foreign languages—mainly English—from preschool or first grade, reflecting an understanding of the advantages of an early start. However, the extent of policy implementation is not clear from the information available, which is restricted to the Buenos Aires metropolitan area in the case of Argentina and to a hundred public schools in Paraguay. Issues of personnel, materials, and resources still need to be considered in the planning and policies regarding such implementation.

Chinese teaching and learning in Paraguay and Argentina have been mainly community-driven, responding to the impact of immigration waves from Taiwan and the PRC. Chile, on the other hand, has a more clearly top-down approach, promoting interest in the Mandarin language and culture from the Ministry of Education, based on the long-standing diplomatic and economic relations with the PRC. In fact, it is the only one of the three countries that has an initiative specific to teaching Mandarin in municipal schools as the second foreign language after English. It is designed mainly for late elementary grades and secondary schools, and individual institutions are free to choose to implement it as early as kindergarten or the first grade. Therefore, early Chinese learning takes place almost exclusively at private community schools, as in the case of Paraguay, or by choice of public institutions through agreements with China's government (represented by its Ministry of Education or local embassies), as in the case of Chile, or by the implementation of special programs, such as *Escuela Normal* No. 10 or the dual bilingual elementary school in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Curricula are locally developed, following or replicating models from Taiwan or the PRC and adapted to the needs of the specific programs. Something similar occurs with textbooks and materials.

However, while Paraguay and Argentina have strong Chinese communities that favor promoting their language and culture in a formal education context, including early language education, in Chile policy decisions to implement programs are mostly influenced by the economic advantage of a strong partnership with the PRC. Thus, the Chilean government fosters agreements with the Ministry of Education of China, the Confucius Institute, and Hanban, all of which play an active role in providing support, in the form of money and resources, such as teachers and teacher training, for the teaching of Chinese in Chilean schools.

In terms of personnel policies, Paraguay and Chile have arrangements for teacher exchanges and training with the governments of Taiwan and the PRC, respectively. Argentina, on the other hand, depends on the resources available in the local community. However, it is clear that for the continuity of Mandarin teaching, and particularly for its implementation in early language programs, it will be imperative to develop policies and actions that will guarantee teacher education and training with this particular end in mind.

The Chinese community in Paraguay, composed mostly of Taiwanese immigrants and descendants, is currently shrinking. Chinese has remained a language of the community, and there seems to be no future actions planned to extend it to the public and education realms. Chile and Argentina, on the other hand, appear to have enough momentum to continue and expand their Mandarin teaching policies and practices. Most current examples of early language learning there are drawn from local and individual efforts that, nevertheless, might inspire more far-reaching access and curriculum policies. This bottom-up approach to language planning, as described and exemplified in the works of Hornberger (2006), Shohamy (2006), Spolsky (2009), and McCarty (2011), may lead to orientations and guidelines for the future of teaching and learning Mandarin in South America.

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# Chapter 13

## German Teaching and Learning in Early Years and Primary Schools in the UK



Hazel Crichton

**Abstract** German is traditionally less popular in UK primary schools than French or Spanish, perhaps because of a lack of qualified teachers or training opportunities. In this chapter, issues are discussed regarding the quality and consistency of language teaching, where England and Scotland are the only component countries which have policies. These are vague and lack coherence, nor do they specify language(s) children should learn. The Goethe Institut and other organisations' work providing materials and resources for learning German and training opportunities are acknowledged, but these are on a small scale, compared to, for example, the coverage afforded by the Confucius Institute network. The chapter discusses the situation regarding German teaching and learning and concludes that a coherent programme of teacher training, including curriculum, methodology, materials and evaluation goals, underpinned by a clear funding commitment, must be in place to support teachers and primary learners for German to flourish.

**Keywords** German learning in the UK · Primary language teaching and learning · Issues around learning German · Primary language training

This chapter discusses the language education policies of each of the constituent countries of the UK and their implications for German teaching and learning in the early years and primary school throughout the UK as a whole. It will conclude by offering recommendations in a number of policy areas, in accordance with Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework for language-in-education planning and policy goals. Each country of the UK, that is, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, has its own educational system, which includes policies for foreign language learning in the early years and primary school. Since policies are not

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language specific, it is not easy to provide a clear overview of the situation regarding German teaching and learning at the policy level.

Policies use the umbrella term ‘modern languages’ and mainly refer to European languages, which include German. It might be argued that taking a generic approach to ‘foreign language education’, not acknowledging the distinctiveness of individual languages and their place within an overall language-in-education ecology, is indicative of an attitude to language teaching and learning which may be described as ill-informed. Certainly, there appears to be no rationale in any of the component countries’ language learning policies suggesting reasons for promoting one language over another. Nonetheless, each country has clear policy statements regarding the importance of teaching and learning languages in the primary school, and in England and Scotland foreign language learning in some form is a compulsory part of primary education and increasingly features in early years’ environments.

In terms of European languages, French has, for historical reasons, been traditionally the foreign language that was taught and learned in UK schools (McLelland, 2018). German teaching and learning started to flourish in the eighteenth century, perhaps as a result of the British royal family’s connections to the German House of Hannover. An upsurge in interest in learning Spanish, which rose in prominence in the late twentieth century, has come at the expense of German. Since the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Mandarin has also been gaining importance as a foreign language and has been supported generously by the Chinese government through its Confucius Institutes with the support of the UK government. At the time of writing, there are 29 Confucius Institutes, housed in universities across the UK, and more than 100 Confucius Classrooms based in schools throughout the UK; “... the prominence of Chinese in British language education has been transformed from virtual invisibility to privileged status” (McLelland, 2018, p. 8). It appears that the generous resources of the Confucius Institutes across the UK mean that corresponding German cultural organisations, such as the Goethe Institute and UK-German Connection, cannot compete in promoting the learning of German in primary schools at the same level as their Chinese counterparts who promote the study of Mandarin. While it might be argued that increasing globalisation means that a re-ecologising of language learning is taking place, the courses offered by the Confucius Institutes and Classrooms tend to concentrate on culturally stereotypical activities, such as paper cutting, calligraphy and Tai Chi, with actual language learning being given less time than other languages in the classroom, particularly in the early stages of education (The Conversation, 2018). Chinese is seen as a desirable language to learn for career prospects (YouGov, 2014), possibly reflecting the perceived need for competent linguists for business and trade, but most UK parents, when surveyed, wanted their children to learn Spanish (YouGov, 2014). In the same survey, German came fourth after Chinese and French. There seems no specific reason for German’s lack of popularity in the UK. It may be that Spanish, spoken by 572 million speakers in the world (7.8% of the world’s population) (Cervantes Institute, 2017), is seen as a more globally useful language than German, which has 120 million as a first or second language. However, despite an extensive search,

there appears to be a lack of data to explain why German is less popular as a foreign language.

A number of organisations support early language learning of German, and they have worked on a voluntary basis with individual schools and several local authorities to ensure programmes of German teaching across the UK are implemented, even if the funds to support country-wide coverage are not available. This chapter will describe several initiatives taken by the Goethe Institute and other interested parties to protect and encourage the study of German in early learning environments and a number of primary schools in the UK, providing examples of good practice in schools where German is taught. Materials and resources aimed specifically at early stage and primary schools' German teaching and learning will be discussed, and the challenges to foreign language learning in general and German in particular in the UK will be examined. Finally, the chapter will look to the future of German teaching and learning in the UK in the early stages of children's education discussing implications for practice and making recommendations for policy.

## **Policy for Early German Learning in UK**

In any discussion of early German learning in the UK, a number of issues need to be taken into account. The major issue is that each of the countries which make up the UK has separate policies regarding foreign language learning in general, and language learning in the primary school and early environments in particular, as each country is responsible for its own education system. It is therefore impossible to refer to a unified policy for the whole domain. In addition, as noted previously, policy on modern language learning in the component countries of the UK is not language specific; therefore, finding precise information about German early-learning policy has proved an impossible task, not only because all component countries in the UK have their own distinct policies at the macro level, but also interpretation of these policies at the meso and micro levels is variable. Nevertheless, there are many similarities, albeit with some significant differences, which will be discussed in this chapter.

Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) language-in-education policy and planning framework recognises seven key elements of successful language planning and policy goals, within any national language planning and policy framework, which are paraphrased below:

- Access policy: Who are the learners and when do they start?
- Community policy: What are the funding implications?
- Curriculum policy: What are the language learning and teaching objectives?
- Methodology policy: What methodology is used?
- Materials policy: What resources and materials are used?
- Personnel policy: Who teaches the language and how are they prepared?

- Evaluation policy: How is progress assessed and by whom? (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005).

These elements provide a useful framework within which the status and position of German teaching and learning in primary and nursery schools in the UK can be explored.

As noted previously, each component country in the UK has its own policies for learning foreign languages in the early years and primary school settings. Despite the UK's membership in the European Union (at the time of writing, the UK's membership is about to end), there has never been a coherent approach to language learning which references the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001), adopted by all other countries in the EU, and which values all languages equally, underlining the importance of plurilingualism as part of the freedom of movement for work, leisure and lifelong learning. Each component country of the UK might be said to take an idiosyncratic view of the importance of language learning at best and, given the general acceptance that English is the language of the globalised world (Crystal, 2012) and business (Cogo & Yanaprasart, 2018), a disregard for any need to learn any language other than English at worst. Each country's language policy and planning will be examined using Kaplan and Baldauf's framework to unpack the success or otherwise of the implementation of German teaching and learning before discussing trends across the UK as a whole and making recommendations to ensure the continued development of German learning and teaching.

Studies on language teaching in UK primary schools have identified some serious issues with regard to the quality and consistency of provision (Jones et al., 2017; Tinsley & Board 2016a, b; Valdera Gil & Crichton, 2018). A lack of appropriate training opportunities has been cited as the cause of considerable concern among primary practitioners, who, as generalist teachers, have also expressed nervousness about teaching a language in which they may not be proficient (Valdera Gil & Crichton, 2018). In addition, information gathered from policymakers and practitioners across the UK suggests that German provision in the primary school is patchy at best and is, in fact, declining in the face of a number of challenges from other languages and competing political pressures on curricula. Governmental emphasis on the importance of STEM subjects has also led to greater prominence being given to science and mathematics education in schools, rather than foreign languages, starting from an early base.

## *England*

As the largest and most populous country in the UK, with over 55 million inhabitants and 84% of the UK's population, England is usually viewed as the most influential country in the UK. It has a wide and diverse population, with over 20% of children in English primary schools now speaking a different language at home (Department for Education, 2018). Currently in England, there is no policy for

kindergarten-type preschool language learning. In the primary school sector, foreign language teaching and learning was made part of the compulsory core curriculum for children aged 7–11 (Keystage 2) in 2014 (Department of Education, 2013). However, despite clear direction regarding the access policy (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005), the other elements of policy goals have been left rather vague. The wording of the policy does not make clear how teaching resources, materials and methodology are to be planned for, nor does it clarify how personnel and curriculum policy will be enacted. There does not seem to have been planning for progression in any one language, with the result that when learners move to secondary school, or even another class in the same school, they may have to start afresh learning a different language. No specific language is mentioned in policy (Long et al., 2020), and, possibly as a result, the most commonly taught languages are French (74%) and Spanish (22%), with German (4%) in a distant third place (Tinsley & Board, 2016a, 2016b). Reasons behind the popularity of French and growing popularity of Spanish may relate to historical trading and educational links with France and parental pressure on schools due to the perceived popularity of Spain and Spanish-speaking countries as holiday destinations. With regard to personnel policy, the recruitment of suitably qualified teachers and improving current primary teachers' confidence in their ability to deliver this area of the curriculum are seen as two of the major challenges facing foreign language provision in the primary sector in general, and German in particular.

Actual policy guidelines are vague and aspirational and might be considered overly ambitious for this age and stage of learning:

The teaching should enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in speech and in writing. It should also provide opportunities for them to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and read great literature in the original language. Language teaching should provide the foundation for learning further languages, equipping pupils to study and work in other countries. (Department for Education 2013, p. 1)

There is no guidance on methodology or evaluation at the macro level, and therefore, at the meso and micro levels, access to structured German language learning could be said to be on an ad hoc basis. Nonetheless, the Goethe Institut, the German government cultural and language organisation, has been very pro-active in supporting schools that express an interest in German language teaching and learning. A number of primary schools in England and a small number of kindergarten-age facilities have been supported by the Goethe Institut, which has produced a variety of online materials, most of which are free of charge to schools with ideas for activities specifically aimed at young learners (Goethe Institut, n.d.). The Goethe Institut also offers limited free training for teachers to develop their skills to be able to teach German at a basic level and grants for further study in Germany. A network of schools across England has been established which aims to link schools teaching German and provide them with support and extra resourcing, as well as collaborative projects and seminars which also aim to increase the number of schools and pupils learning German in the primary stage.

Other sources of support include the UK-German Connection, funded by the UK and German governments, the British Council and the Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (a national German organisation working to promote international exchange and collaboration in the school sector). This organisation actively supports schools with resources, which include the provision of German conversation assistants. Further support is provided by the Association for Language Learning, a UK-wide organisation for language teachers at all levels. These organisations promote the learning of German at a variety of levels, mostly providing motivational literature but also some active involvement in awarding grants to teachers and pupils for trips and exchanges. The UK-German Connection in particular offers opportunities for young learners as well as their teachers to become involved in exchanges and school partnerships. Although perceived as mainly focusing on secondary age learners, there are also programmes in place for primary German teaching and learning. It is possible that secondary schools that take part in these exchanges will instigate a ‘trickle down’ effect to their associated primary schools. It appears that in England, Kaplan and Baldauf’s community, resources, methodology, materials and personnel policies (2005) have been addressed on an informal basis through the support offered by the Goethe Institut and other interested organisations, rather than through government policy documents and targeted funding. In addition, it is important to note that the resources and support offered are nowhere near to being comparably funded to the level of that which Mandarin enjoys.

## *Wales*

Wales has a very similar education system to that of England, with one important difference regarding learning of languages other than English: all children by law must learn Welsh, and it is the medium of education in many schools (Welsh Government, 2015). This has had an important effect on foreign language learning, including German, in the early stages of education. A report by Tinsley and Board in 2016 identified the most popular modern foreign language taught in Welsh primary schools as French, followed by Spanish; however, these were almost exclusively taught at the later stages of primary education, often by visiting teachers from the secondary school. At the time of writing, a recent study on modern foreign languages in Welsh secondary schools (Tinsley, 2018) found that less than half of Welsh secondary schools had any contact with their associated primary schools, and often that contact was very limited. One-third of Welsh secondary schools considered that their associated primary schools were not teaching any foreign languages, claiming that this was a result of the need to develop Welsh language skills, particularly at the early stages. It can therefore be concluded that specialised language learning in Welsh primary schools of any language other than Welsh could be said to be infrequent.

The Goethe Institut has also been active in promoting German to Welsh primary schools, and there is some evidence that the Routes into Languages initiative



(<https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/>) undertaken by universities has reached a number of schools (Tinsley & Board, 2016a, b). However, this initiative is aimed primarily at older learners in the secondary and any outcomes for younger learners may rely on interested secondary teachers reaching out to associated primary schools. In addition, the funding for the Routes into Languages project has now finished. This means that, until more funding has been assured, support provided by events and materials designed to stimulate the learning of German has been put on hold. Primary head teachers have identified issues regarding personnel policy and resources and materials for primary foreign languages in general, so it seems likely that German qualified staff and resources to support primary German learning are scarce. Head teachers in Welsh primary schools also complain of an already overcrowded curriculum, an increasing emphasis on the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects and priorities to improve Welsh language teaching and learning in primary schools (Tinsley & Board, 2016a, b). It appears that in Wales there are a number of competing policy priorities which have not been addressed, and because foreign languages are not compulsory until secondary school, the result is that modern foreign languages in general and German in particular have been compromised.

### *Northern Ireland*

In Northern Ireland, the majority of primary school head teachers agree that an additional language is beneficial for young learners and that additional language learning should be a mandatory part of the primary curriculum (Jones et al., 2017). However, in a recent report by Jones et al. (2017), many also complained about the imperative to improve literacy and numeracy in young learners, which they claimed prevented the inclusion of any foreign language learning. This view might be viewed as misguided, given the evidence of improvement of first language literacy outcomes as a result of foreign language learning (Bialystok, 2018; Cheater & Farren 2001; Murphy et al., 2015). A primary language learning initiative, the Primary Modern Languages Programme (PMLP) ran for 8 years and came to an end in 2015 due to spending cutbacks in the Department of Education (Jones et al., 2017). A report, jointly commissioned by the Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies and the Northern Ireland Department of Education in 2012, offered a series of wide-ranging recommendations, including starting learning second and subsequent foreign languages as early as possible and consolidation and extension of the PMLP (Gillespie et al., 2012); however, there seems to have been no movement to make these recommendations a reality, possibly as a result of economic or political pressures.

Thus, at the time of this writing there appear to be no plans to make modern languages part of the statutory primary curriculum in Northern Ireland. Since there is no policy on foreign language learning, there appears to be a lack of consistency across the province regarding what and how languages are taught and the level of

language learned. Although there appear to be no supporting figures, from the Review of Current Primary Languages in Northern Ireland (Jones et al., 2017), Spanish is the most popular language taught in Northern Ireland, with French second and German again a distant third. Mandarin is also on the rise, supported by 48 Mandarin Chinese teachers funded by the Confucius Institute, based at Ulster University in Belfast, and 8 Confucius Hub Schools across the province. The Goethe Institut and UK-German Connection provide support similar to that offered to schools in England and Wales, but from informal conversations with their representatives, it is clear that they feel unable to compete with the level of funding and the personnel available from the Chinese government, nor the popularity of Spanish, possibly due to perceptions (which may not have any basis in fact) that it is an easier language to learn.

### *Scotland*

It could be argued that Scotland is the leading nation in the UK in terms of policy on primary language learning. Recent policy reforms mean that all primary teachers are expected to teach a first foreign language as part of the curriculum from the first year of primary school, when children are aged 5, and a second foreign language from the fifth year of primary education when children are aged 9–10 (Scottish Government, 2012a, 2012b). With regard to specific foreign languages, the Scottish government has steered clear of prescribing one particular language, citing the diverse demographics and geography in Scotland, which means that at the meso and micro levels, local authorities and individual schools can shape the language provision to suit their stakeholders. Scotland appears to be the only nation which has systematically recorded the numbers of primary schools where pupils study German. At the time of writing, 61 out of 370 Scottish primary schools taught German as a first foreign language and 114 provided some instruction in German as a second foreign language. While this may be considered encouraging, once again German is positioned in third place regarding perceived importance, after French and Spanish.

With regard to materials and methodology policy, the government-funded agency Education Scotland launched a National Improvement Hub where resources and guidance are available to primary practitioners for all languages. The Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT), another government-funded organisation, has also provided in-service training, materials and resources for primary schools, in some way addressing personnel, methodology and materials policies. In all, since 2013, the Scottish Government has supported what is called the 1 + 2 policy (mother tongue + two foreign languages from age 5) with funding of over £25 million, and they emphasise that they remain **‘fully committed** to the 1 + 2 policy to enhance and extend language learning for all children and young people from early primary stages onwards’ (Scottish Government, 2017). However, it should be noted that over the same time period, the government has also provided over £48 million for Gaelic education and over £80 million for Gaelic broadcasting.

Since Gaelic has under 60,000 speakers, approximately 1.1% of the Scottish population, advocates for greater funding for modern foreign languages argue that, if the government is serious about supporting modern foreign languages, some of what they see as the disproportionate amount of spending on Gaelic could be used to enhance the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages (RSE, 2006) and reverse the downward trend of German.

Similar to the other countries in the UK, support is provided by the Goethe Institut, which sponsors professional development programmes for teachers and resources to enhance teaching and learning. However, there are issues regarding the training of primary teachers and teacher confidence in delivering a language in which they are not proficient (Tierney 2011; Tierney & Gallestegi, 2013; Valdera & Crichton, 2018). Although the government agencies work hard to provide support at the macro level, a lack of guidance as to how languages, including German, can be systematically supported across the country has meant that funding has not always been targeted appropriately by the local authorities at the meso level (Crichton, 2018). It appears that, although government policy is clear about the necessity of early language learning, similar to other parts of the UK, at the meso and micro levels, there is a lack of coherence in many areas.

## **Discussion: Early German Learning Across the UK**

It seems clear from an examination of the policies, government papers and reported practice related to each component UK country that foreign language learning in general and German teaching and learning specifically are not prioritised in the early years and primary school settings in the UK. With regard to foreign language policy, there is no guidance in any of the countries as to which language should be taught or compelling information about the relative advantages of early language learning with regard to overall literacy gains or the development of interpersonal or intercultural skills, all of which may be considered crucial in arguing the case for a systematic, structured policy for German learning, which takes into account Kaplan and Baldauf's (2005) framework of language-in-education policy goals. Taking each of these language policy and planning goals in turn, it can be seen that throughout the UK, much work remains to be done if German is to regain its prominence as an important language for business, leisure and personal satisfaction.

### ***Access Policy***

In two countries of the UK, the age and stage of the learners have been identified in policy; however, no clear message regarding other policies, such as which language or time for exposure, has emerged. In the other two countries, while lip service is paid to the desirability of foreign language learning, including German, in the early

years and primary schools, there is no directive from the government regarding its inclusion in the curriculum, with the possible result of unequal provision occurs (Jones et al., 2017).

### ***Community Policy***

It appears that, of the four nations which make up the UK, only Scotland has systematically provided specific funding to local authorities for language teaching, which is then disbursed to schools. However, as noted previously, there is no direction as to how the money provided may be spent, with decisions made at the meso or micro level with no acknowledged framework or rationale.

### ***Resources and Materials Policy***

It could be argued that all countries in the UK rely on resourcing and materials for German teaching provided by interested organisations, such as the Goethe Institut, the UK-German Connection, the Association for Language Learning, and the Routes into Languages initiative for teaching materials and ideas for classroom activities in German. In addition, numerous websites offer resources for German teaching, some of which are more appropriate for early years and primary children's levels than others. In Scotland, support is offered through government-funded organisations Education Scotland and SCILT, both of which aim to support German teaching and learning from the early years as much as possible. However, they also have responsibility for supporting French, Spanish, Mandarin and Gaelic, and the growing popularity of Spanish and French could be said to threaten the continued study of German.

### ***Curriculum Policy***

As noted previously, in the two countries where language learning has been enshrined in policy, what is actually taught tends to depend very much on the teacher's expertise or enthusiasm. Although there are a set of outcomes for each of these countries' primary language learning, these are apt to be vague and ill-defined, such as a selection of those from the Primary Language Programmes of Study in the English National Curriculum (Department of Education, 2013):

Pupils should be taught to:

- listen attentively to spoken language and show understanding by joining in and responding;

- explore the patterns and sounds of language through songs and rhymes and link the spelling, sound and meaning of words;
- engage in conversations, ask and answer questions, express opinions and respond to those of others, and seek clarification and help; and
- speak in sentences using familiar vocabulary and phrases.

Education Scotland has produced a series of reference grammars, including one for German (Education Scotland, n.d.), as well as suggested outcomes for early learners (Education Scotland, 2018). Again, these are not seen as prescriptive, in order to allow for particular circumstances within schools.

In Wales and Northern Ireland, the lack of policy regarding the teaching of any foreign language means that any German curriculum will necessarily reflect individual teachers' expertise in the language and head teachers' support for German teaching.

### *Methodology Policy*

In general, policy documents and advice for teachers suggest that a communicative methodology is recommended in the early years and primary school teaching of German. The resources and suggestions for activities provided by the various governmental and interested organisations and on the websites of other providers all indicate an active-learning approach, where teachers are encouraged to involve learners in actively using the language through the use of song, games, video clips and 'fun' activities, which may include cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning involving other areas of the curriculum. Learner communicative competence and confidence are regarded as the aim; however, this may prove difficult if the teachers themselves are not fluent or confident in their use of German. Studies on the use of target language use have consistently flagged teacher confidence as an issue, even among those teachers qualified to the degree level (Franklin, 1990; Meiring & Norman, 2002; Valdera Gil & Crichton, 2018). It is surely unrealistic to ask teachers without any qualifications in German to teach it confidently without a great deal of support and training, which may be deemed costly.

### *Personnel Policy*

It could be argued that who teaches German and how they are prepared, including in-service training of current primary and early-age teachers, constitute the most important policy for governments to get right, with regard to providing a competent, confident and effective workforce. In all countries of the UK, there appears to be a rather casual approach to the training of primary and preprimary teachers with regard to language teaching in general and German in particular. At the initial

teacher education level in Scotland and Northern Ireland, universities have not been given any clear guidance by the government, and in England there is a large diversity of routes into teaching, including teaching without a degree and others which offer on-the-job training. In Scotland, Northern Ireland and in those English and Welsh universities which offer structured teaching qualification programmes, language teaching as part of the primary and early years is part of the overall initial teacher education provision, but in England and Wales not every teacher takes this route to qualified teacher status.

Targeted in-service courses, such as those provided by the Goethe Institut, have a very clear focus on the younger learner and are seen as useful, enjoyable and enriching, as are their short programmes of study in Germany for teachers. However, although the intensive courses they offer in Germany are heavily subsidised by the German government, their reach is very limited and many schools and local authorities may be reluctant or unable to pay for a course which may only benefit one teacher rather than a large group. Preference may be given to those courses which offer wider coverage in-house or across the authority, although they may lack the depth that immersion in a German-speaking culture over a sustained period of time can offer. A study on the progress made in implementing the Scottish 1 + 2 policy identified serious issues concerning workforce and recommended that these needed to be resolved if the policy was to be successful long term. It also recommended that

[t]he role of Initial Teacher Education, the GTCS, the expectations of new teachers arriving in schools in relation to their preparedness for this initiative, as well as the interface with ongoing CPD, requires full discussion and agreement. (Scottish Government, 2012b, p.7)

It appears that similar issues are prevalent in other parts of the UK.

### ***Evaluation Policy***

There seems to be little independent evaluation of language teaching in general in the primary school and early years settings across the UK. Apart from identifying trends in provision (Jones et al., 2017; Tinsley, 2018; Tinsley & Board, 2016a, 2016b), there appears to have been little or no evaluation regarding actual progression from early years to the end of primary, or of the transition to language learning in the secondary in England or Scotland, the two countries in which policy on language learning is in force. Both countries appear to rely on government agencies, which in turn expect schools to provide information in order to evaluate progress in students' learning, which cannot be viewed in the same way as a rigorous, objective research study. In Wales and Northern Ireland, because there is no policy imperative, the learning of German cannot be evaluated formally.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

It is clear from the preceding discussion that language learning in general and German language learning in particular are in a poor state in the UK's early years and primary school settings. Despite support for German from the Goethe Institut and other interested organisations, the future of German in nursery and primary schools might even be described as precarious. The foregoing discussion identified a number of possible reasons for this poor state, including a lack of structure and systematic planning at the macro, meso and micro levels at all levels of decision-making. It seems obvious that, if an initiative concerning early year language learning is part of a national policy, then decisions must be taken regarding which language(s) will be taught and effective teacher training put in place, so that a coherent strategy for progression across the sectors can be affected. Such a strategy would include planning resources and materials and clear curriculum guidelines. However, throughout the UK, even in those countries where language learning in the primary and early years is policy, these decisions have not been taken by policymakers, with the result that German is losing ground.

An article in the *Times* newspaper recently (2019), which reviewed job advertisements in business, argued that the demand for German speakers had risen 11.6% since 2016, making it more desirable than almost every other European language. In the same period, German presentations at the national examination level have fallen dramatically in all four nations of the UK. Part of the reason for the drop in students studying German in secondary school and subsequently in university is the perception that German, in common with other languages, is 'hard' compared with other so-called 'softer' subjects like media or sociology (Coe et al., 2008). This leads to a vicious circle, as fewer students study the language in higher education, so the pool of personnel required to teach German effectively becomes ever smaller.

Language learning in the United Kingdom is poor compared to other European countries. A European Union survey on languages spoken by European citizens (European Commission, 2006) revealed that the UK was the second most monolingual country in the EU after Ireland, with 62% of its citizens unable to communicate in a language other than English. It may be that the global influence of English as the language of international communication has led to a failure to see any advantage in making the effort to learn a foreign language (Chambers, 1999), leading to a situation where it is entirely possible for primary teaching students to have passed through the school system without engaging with a foreign language. Adding German to their portfolio of skills while undertaking their initial teacher education programmes may be very challenging, but not impossible. One recommendation for addressing the issues around language learning in the UK might be that all component countries in the UK collaborate to produce a comprehensive workable and sustainable policy regarding personnel, resources, curriculum and evaluation in order to provide a clear framework, within which universities, local authorities and schools could plan for modern languages provision in general, and German in particular.



The Association for Language Learning, which represents language teachers at all levels, has collated information about the benefits of learning German as well as a number of strategies for promoting the language and culture in schools. The UK-German Connection offers a range of bilateral programmes, trips and seminars aimed at facilitating UK-German youth relations. Individual schools and, in some cases, local authorities have initiated e-twinning arrangements with their counterparts in Germany and have shown great resourcefulness in establishing and maintaining links between young German children and their UK counterparts. Initiatives such as these, aimed at raising the profile of German, although very small in number, could be the way forward in informing policymakers about the cultural and language benefits of studying German, so that curriculum policy ensures it is used ‘for real’ rather than as an isolated subject of study with no real perceived relevance.

Another area of curriculum policy which, it may be argued, has not been exploited fully by many primary schools is that of literacy development. While Scottish curriculum documents mention the links between languages and overall literacy development in English, it appears that a lack of knowledge of German limits the connections that teachers can make across languages. It is not clear if the links between language learning and literacy gains have been acknowledged in policy in other parts of the UK. The use of projects such as *Discovering Language* (ASCL, n.d.) aims to equip teachers with strategies they can deploy in the multilingual classroom to develop primary school children’s language awareness. Programmes such as these also help to build teachers’ confidence, an issue already identified as needing serious attention in the UK. Evaluations of the project were very positive and may be the way forward to address the perceived preference for French and Spanish. In addition, it can be argued that they may be incorporated into initial teacher education programmes and in-service programmes fairly easily to enhance the literacy development of trainee and practising teachers. In Scotland, the Scottish Council of Deans of Education modern languages sub-committee has created a National Languages Framework (2018), designed specifically for primary (and secondary) teachers at all levels and aimed at drawing attention to the most recent research regarding language learning, suggested approaches to teaching languages, including German, and literacy development. It also includes a reflective tool for teachers to reflect on their own language learning and classroom experiences. A framework such as this could enable teachers to be more confident in their classroom practice, encouraging a wider intercultural and pluriliteracy approach when working with their young learners.

As noted previously, a sound personnel planning policy needs to be established with regard to workforce planning as well as high-quality training (ADES, n.d.). This requires government policymakers and initial and continuing teacher education providers to have a series of conversations to put in place training programmes to ensure that early-years and primary teachers feel confident and competent to deliver stimulating and enjoyable programmes of German study at all levels.

At the same time, planning for resources should be undertaken in a systematic manner. There is a wealth of materials and suggestions for classroom activities to teach and learn German online, and it may be that the current support already

available from the Goethe Institut and UK-German Connection, aligned with a comprehensive guide as to how to use all available sources of support, both cultural and linguistic, would further enable teachers of young learners to feel secure about teaching German.

Learning another language provides children with the tools to become more interculturally aware and linguistically competent. It seems that in the UK, the perceived relevance of languages is that they are less important than mathematics and the sciences. German, with its smaller number of speakers than Mandarin or Spanish, or French worldwide, appears to be getting squeezed, so that fewer schools are in a position to offer it to young learners. The recommendations given earlier would go some way towards addressing the decline in German teaching specifically by challenging current attitudes to learning languages in general and making explicit the intercultural, linguistic and cognitive benefits they can bring. However, for these to be successful there needs to be an adequate funding stream and a clearly stated commitment by the UK government and the governments within each component country to make learning a foreign language a priority and not an optional 'add-on'. It is possible that the economic imperative to have fluent German speakers in business and commerce will eventually influence government policy. Although parents may recognise the importance of future career opportunities and cognitive benefits from learning German, their young children may not appreciate them. Thus, media can also play their part: rather than bemoaning the decline in German language learning, newspapers, television reports and social media could highlight the positive benefits of learning German, with appropriate relevant case studies illustrating how enjoyable learning to communicate with German-speaking youngsters of the same age can be.

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# **Part V**

## **Conclusion**

# Chapter 14

## Language Policy for Starting Early, Reflections and Considerations



Joseph Lo Bianco

**Abstract** This chapter focuses on shifting practices of language law and policy that once undermined but now typically, though not altogether successfully, sustain and promote early language learning initiatives. It begins with a reflection on one of the key problems associated with early language learning initiatives –the generally inconsistent and even poor record of implementation. I address this by introducing some standpoint perspectives in policy, for different actors at different stages of the process. A brief overview of attitudes over time follows, contrasting the prevailing sense of optimism and commitment so far in the twenty-first century with the generally more pessimistic and hostile context of precisely a century ago, the early part of the twentieth century. The next focus is to extract themes and arguments from the case studies reported in the book and the framing chapter to then conclude with an account of a language policy and planning model that expands the scope of what is normally considered to count as processes of formal language planning.

**Keywords** Language policy · Early language learning · Twenty-first century · Language planning model

### The Implementation Dilemma

One of the most common laments about language policy (LP) concerns implementation. Experience suggests that government policies, and even constitutional provisions to support minority languages, often achieve little or fail. But why is this the case? Why is it so common that policy ‘fails to deliver’?

Policy failure is not unique to language planning, but it is common to human endeavours where we seek to intervene in the undifferentiated rush of experience to insert our plans, intentions and ambitions. Even so, it is a serious concern how often and how deeply LPs do not achieve their stated aims. To grasp why will require

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critically and theoretically inclined LP specialists to take practical questions more seriously and practitioners (e.g. teachers, curriculum writers) to develop greater policy literacy. To improve the success rate of policy implementation requires us to improve the design of policies, to analyse how ideas gain traction, to ensure practitioner participation in policy design, and to familiarise more academic specialists with practical constraints.

The biggest challenge, however, remains the mobilisation (ideas, research, direct contact with policymakers, alliances with parents, media and ongoing effort) needed to generate consensus that policies should espouse inclusive, multilingual and rights-based aims. Policies work best when they acknowledge different interests, such as language enrichment goals and social justice agendas, and commit public authorities to serious, continuously monitored implementation and sufficient funding. Implementation is not something academic language planning specialists should relegate to administrators, public officials and practitioners, while they focus on theory and critical analysis; and theory and critical analysis are not things that practitioners (teachers and others involved in delivering language education) should leave to academics.

While some level of policy failure is common in all areas of policy activity, making language an object for policy attention does contain special characteristics that mark language problems as 'wicked'. As Lo Bianco and Aliani (2013) argue, building on Davis (1994), policy has three 'moments': the *intended* (the aims that policy statements declare or announce and the problem they will tackle); the *implemented* (policy texts are usually legalistic, administrative and general, with only some parts actually funded for implementation). The difference between intended and implemented policy is greater than casual observers recognise. The *experienced* policy refers to what the law, mandate or report 'feels' and 'looks' like when converted into a classroom programme: usually the activities, resources, timetabling, frequency, and intensity, but also what the policy displaces, what rhetoric it comes with, what logic it favours. The experienced policy is where the citizen, who is the main but not sole intended recipient of the policy, encounters what the announced government policy really becomes and forms a view of its value, seriousness, and cultural and political benefits, as well as economic costs and consequences.

The words intended, implemented and experienced describe selected points on a continuum. They are not meant to depict radically separate domains or to describe a top-down sequence in which distant government officials announce and impose a new initiative, which trickles down through a bureaucracy that selects implementation sites, runs trials and makes the arrangements for classroom practitioners and students to encounter each other under the aegis of the policy remit. In reality, policy is more interactive, interconnected and responsive.

The experienced policy is evaluated, informally as well as formally, as it is experienced. Is the policy design robust? Is the funding and support sufficient? Do we share the goals of the policy? Is it serious or tokenistic? Is the new language programme integrated into school practice? What is being replaced or made vulnerable or integrated into the new policy?



Evaluative judgements of practitioners, students, closely involved researchers and parents become the raw material of future citizens and professional action. If we find policy defective, we can agitate for change (improvement or overhaul), and if this reaches politicians and officials (in relatively open and democratic sociopolitical settings), experienced policy can become a catalyst for modified or new policy.

Formal evaluations are part of this process. New policy designs arise in the process of systematic judgement on implementation, so the experienced is contrasted with the intention. New policies produce a new policy *intention*, which becomes a new moment of policy *implementation*, and in turn becomes a new policy *experience*.

Despite this depiction of continuity, separable moments of intention, implementation and experience are identifiable and relatively stable points on a continuum, each with different main actors. The protagonists are professionals (teachers and researchers), citizens (families, students), appointed officials (under government direction) and elected decision makers (politicians with delegated authority, effectively citizen representatives). The imagery here is idealised; missing is the raw power of interests. This skeletal depiction of a representative policy democracy only exists in environments where power, often asymmetrically distributed, and conflicting interests (cultural, economic, political) attach to different policies and policy arguments, alongside elements of the judiciary, mass media, agitation, mobilisation and lobby coalitions.

Contemporary policymaking entails international exposure, with actors, tools and information drawn from beyond the political jurisdiction issuing the policy, so that policy texts do not get designed exclusively within bounded nation states and their institutions. Lingard et al. (2005) show how policy texts in education are produced within a community of policymaking, a '*diaspora of policy ideas*', produced in an increasingly shared '*cosmopolitan habitus of policy-makers*' (p. 761). Ideas circulate extranationally between think tanks, academic conferences and publications, commissioned evaluations, public media, pressure groups, compromises and political expediency, and so the raw material of policy texts (how they name the problem being addressed, what history they cite, what research they reference) is not sourced exclusively from within the relevant political jurisdiction. The content of many education policies today is also framed by global performance comparisons against statistical benchmarking. The best known is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which exposes policy processes internal to a particular country to outside evaluative judgement, comparison and critique.

Yet, the historical ethos of professionalism grants varying degrees of latitude to teachers and schools to interpret, refine and even modify policy instructions they receive from education authorities, and so they become policymakers. In some jurisdictions practitioners can disagree with received policy, devise an original alternative, or implement dissenting versions, and when the classroom door is closed, teachers and students interact in ways sovereign and exclusive to their relationship on those occasions. These possibilities vary greatly across systems, centralised and directive or decentralised and consultative, some tolerating no local innovation, others encouraging and facilitating it. To get closer to a depiction of real-world LP, however, more nuance is required, mentioned in the final section of the chapter,

about the sociolinguistics of the languages being taught, about how implementing bodies, especially schools, accommodate cultural norms and expectations about communication, and about conflict and societal norms.

Policymakers enjoy many opportunities to develop shared attitudes with other policymakers that transcend the constraints of a given national setting. This often happens through research. We do this when we argue that research conducted on immersion education in Canada can be relevant to immersion programmes in New Zealand, or those in Switzerland are relevant for Thailand. Making a claim to represent findings and patterns, and even ‘truth’ that holds beyond particular circumstances, means that research findings and policy ideas *‘flow rapidly around the globe’* (Lingard et al., 2005, p. 761). In relation to the truths being examined here (learning, languages and age), it is clear that a large degree of internationalisation is possible. Much of what is true and predictable about children’s learning patterns and potential is as true in Argentina as it is in Zimbabwe.

## Centuries and Attitudes

Despite the terrible conflicts that marred the first part of the twentieth century and the hostilities of the Cold War of its middle part, the twentieth century is also characterised by civil rights movements and forms of emancipation that are unprecedented in human history. This suggests that characterising an entire century as one of belligerence, hostility among groups, violence and closure is not tenable. All periodisation and classifying simplify, evident because our current century has witnessed not only genocide, conflict and belligerence like in the twentieth, but also the progressive tenor and claims for human emancipation in the contemporary world inaugurated in the same century.

The main concern here is with language attitudes, however, and here, perhaps, there has been a dramatic shift between centuries. Exactly a century ago, the presence of additional languages in early learning was a very controversial issue. In a milestone 1923 case (*Meyer v Nebraska*, 262 US 390) the US Supreme Court overturned a 1919 state language law. The Nebraska law penalised the teaching of ‘any modern language, other than English’ in schools (private, denominational, parochial or public) prior to eighth grade. The Supreme Court ruled that this restriction violated the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) of the US Constitution, which granted citizenship to all persons ‘born or naturalized’ and provided them with ‘equal protection under the laws’ (US Senate, n.d.). Before Nebraska’s law, bilingual education had been widespread in the US, though never in Native American languages (Macias, 2000), but the law inaugurated a phase of closure and monolingualism.

The state, reflecting the political hostilities of World War I, was home to a substantial German-speaking community, adopted a range of anti-German policies (Macias, 2000), which a censured one-room school instructor, Robert T. Meyer of Zion Lutheran School in the town of Hampton, challenged. The Supreme Court found in his favour, ruling that the liberties and rights envisioned in the Fourteenth

Amendment applied to speakers of languages other than English. What is relevant here is the reasoning for the original law and for its overturning. The framers of the law argued that young children were vulnerable to dangerous foreign influences if their early education was delivered in German, potentially dislodging them from exclusive attachment to America. Vulnerability to such language-mediated political disloyalty arises because of the heightened cultural corruptibility of the young and is greatly diminished after eighth grade, effectively positing a thesis for a cultural critical period based on language fluency. Nunberg (1992) has described it also as ‘folk-Whorfian’ belief about language and the ‘key meanings’ in American life.

The case also turned on whether English has an inherent and distinctive world view through which American culture is uniquely attainable. Transcripts of the proceedings reveal how the court made an effort to understand and describe what American views of language and culture would be, how American political life and the ideals it proclaimed (truth, justice and freedom) could not be fully comprehended in languages other than English, and that an attachment to US political culture required an attachment to English.

This sense that distinctive national ethos is exclusively expressible by a particular language is widely held; it is a form of cultural essentialism (Martinez, 2017) not unique to English or the US. Early or primary education in many parts of the world is invested with belief not so much about skills, capabilities or knowledge but about cultural habituation and identification, socialisation of person-centred notions to ensure lifelong habits of discipline, and, in times of stress, of loyalty, too. In ‘tense times’ (Lo Bianco, 2008), beliefs such as these become more prominent and the language socialisation of young children becomes a focus of attention in the idea that prepubescent learning of ‘foreign’ languages disrupts, at least potentially, an essential process of becoming an encultured being. When language educators advocate an early start to language learning, they typically claim that younger learners are advantaged in some ways. One claimed advantage is that younger learners master ‘native-like’ pronunciation more completely than older learners, another is that the greater time they would spend studying the language, on average, will lead to enhanced linguistic outcomes, especially greater ‘ultimate’ proficiency. Some of these claimed advantages are based on beliefs about the greater time that an early start affords, and occasionally that young learners have a greater ‘ego permeability, which is assumed to confer superiority in target language intercultural skill and study.

These claims are premised on beliefs about and evidence for cognitive or psychological predisposition or a neurologically determinative, prepubescent advantage for language acquisition. Other legitimations cite pragmatic questions about the greater time offered by early-start over later-start programming. Neither side in the Meyer v Nebraska dispute questioned the language and learning advantages of an early start. The Nebraska legislators precisely feared what they believed to be a precocious language advantage, because to them it implied a lasting and possibly ineradicable identity attachment to the culture of the first language, specifically in their case the language of a foreign and hostile power. This particular conjunction renders immersion programmes especially vulnerable to such nativist criticisms.

Similar anti-German sentiment was experienced in Australia, with near-identical instances of targeting the teaching of German and depleting linguistic landscapes, as towns, streets and natural features were required to remove all German connections. School language programmes were closed or forcibly converted into monolingual English, and clauses banning bilingual education were inserted into education acts in several states. In South Australia, almost 70 German language town names, or names that simply evoked German settlement, were changed. Grunthal was renamed Verdun, Petersburg became Peterborough, a New South Wales Germantown became Holbrook, and a Victorian Germantown became Grovedale. A collection of Bismarck Streets, Hamburgers, Rhine Rivers, Heidelbergs and Hildesheims were made to evoke English cultural resonances and Anglo topography (Perkins, 2001, pp. 370–372; Clyne, 1988, 2005).

Shifting to a very different cultural and political context, we also see the same language politics, a fear of the foreign named, with words used as a proxy for politics. In 1934, the central authorities of the Kingdom of Thailand imposed a strict policy of ‘Thaification’: insisting that all Thais should be Buddhist, love the monarchy, and speak Thai. This three-part identity prescription set out what minority populations were expected to assimilate to: political loyalty, religious faith, and language, a defining cluster of what it would mean to be ‘Thai’.

The instrument for achieving this was the National Culture Act, which operated through 12 edicts (กฎหมาย) issued between 1939 and 1942. Edict 1 stipulated the exclusive name of the nation, people and nationality as Thai and Thailand, replacing Siam and Siamese, and Edict 3 banned hyphenated adjectival descriptors for ethnic groups and required the honouring, respect and exclusive use of the Thai language. These cultural mandates were issued under the executive authority of Field Marshall Phibunsongkhram, first as prime minister and then as military dictator (Lo Bianco, 2019b, pp. 301–302), and represent another instance of the belief that early learning of languages should exclusively favour national, official or culturally authorised ones to ensure political and cultural attachment to the polity in which they occur.

In the twenty-first century we are not free from such ideas. In 2007 there were accusations of potential political disloyalty over the public use of Chinese by former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and in 2013 newly appointed US Secretary of State John Kerry pointedly refused to speak French at a press conference, fearing the same accusation. Analysing reactions to these incidents (Lo Bianco, 2014) shows how close to the surface ideas of loyalty and disloyalty remain regarding language, revealing just how close to the surface is the concern about the ‘foreign’ in foreign languages.

This all-too-ready fusing of nation, foreignness and language can be seen even in school enrolments in foreign language education in Australia during political disputes with countries where the school language is spoken. Binational tensions between Australia and Indonesia have flared up from time to time, some coinciding with incidents in which convicted Australian drug traffickers have been imprisoned and executed under Indonesian law or occasional acts of terrorism in Indonesia in which westerners have been targeted, prompting governments to impose travel bans

or advisories and school groups to cancel in-country immersion visits. The Victorian Department of Education's 2006 annual report shows, for example (on p. 24, Fig. 1.4), a decline in the number of primary school students taking Indonesian between 2000 and 2006. Bombings on the island of Bali which targeted tourists and killed many Australians occurred in 2002 and 2005, and it is likely that the bombs and enrolment decreases are related (Slaughter, 2007). In secondary programmes, Indonesian enrolments decreased by 8.9% in 2006 (State of Victoria, 2007, p. 59). The case of Indonesian is particularly interesting owing to the intense bilateralism involved because 'education involves politics. As domestic politics and political relationships between countries change, so language education changes' (Firdaus, 2013, p. 36). Hill (2016) discusses the half century of Indonesian teaching in Australia as part of its national public diplomacy, and this linkage imposes the need to regularly tend to political differences and events and to acknowledge their impact on school language teaching.

The current volume addresses specific languages in early learning settings, in a range of national, subnational and extranational or regional contexts, the with tight reference to international research, trends and policies. It might seem that contextual variations preclude any clear sense of what the broader phenomenon of early language learning (ELL) might be and its generic features and characteristics. This proves not to be the case due to the cohering effect the editors have ensured by structuring the volume's contributions around a common framework and, it seems, the broadest emergence of an overall pattern that might be called twenty-first century: in effect, the impact of accumulated research evidence. Two sources provide a level of tentative confidence of a widely felt trend of positive appreciation that an early start is pedagogically justified. In Ortega (2009) we see a persuasive account of factors and variables in second language education and in Johnstone (2009) evidence of a 'third wave' of commitment to starting early with second languages, 'a truly global phenomenon and ... possibly the world's biggest policy development in education' (2009, p. 33), hence the timely value of the present volume.

It is important to state that a key question for research and policy is not the obviously predictable claim that younger = better, which associates commencement with ultimate achievement, if it makes sense to even speak of an 'ultimate' proficiency given continuous learning, so perhaps exit level achievement. From the Nebraska, Australian and Thailand cases we need to acknowledge that a professional's belief that '*younger is better for learning*' under some conditions and for some people translates into '*younger is more risky*' for cultural values and political loyalty.

Policymaking is a complex space, and as specialist academics we are prone to imagine that policies that specifically address our field of work should be amenable to influence from our research. I firmly believe this myself. But experience shows that policy occurs under political, economic and cultural conditions in which much more is going on than is declared or made explicit. Perhaps as language education academics we need to be more attentive to the envelope of cultural issues and political factors that condition policy, beyond issues of language acquisition, beyond

research lessons and beyond teacher preparation and programme design. This will necessitate developing a greater policy literacy. This volume takes us towards this important goal.

## The State of Things

Framed by a comprehensive and orienting opening chapter by Subhan Zein, this volume consists of 12 case study chapters and this concluding reflection. The impressive scope and commitment of the volume are characterised by a normative and advocatory stance, convinced of the benefits of ELL, and devoted to promoting comprehensive, implementation-effective policy. This approach is signalled in Chap. 1, which argues that policy writing on ELL should itself change and focus on *doing rather than proclaiming* and ensuring future policies are more informed by research evidence about programme design, curriculum, pedagogy and personnel planning and be less preoccupied with convincing reluctant decision makers, the general public or parents of the benefits of an early start.

In his comprehensive account of the state of play of second language acquisition and especially of ELL, Zein documents the steadily increasing support for ELL across the globe. With this in mind he argues that we should set aside ‘ideological contestation’ and take a more pragmatic approach within and towards policy, noting that ELL programmes are now common in education systems across the world and that future challenges lie mostly in improving the quality or increasing the duration of such programmes.

Zein advocates for research to drill down into and describe factors and conditions favourable to success in proficiency attainment in additional languages and to the maintenance of first languages and literacy in both cultural and intercultural knowledge and awareness.

Given the many variables involved – *age* (preschool to upper primary aged learners); *language status* (second, foreign, heritage or additional); *system and sector* (centralised, devolved); and *disparities in resources*, among others – it could seem overly optimistic to aim for a coherent single way to represent global language study for young learners across the globe. On the basis of an extensive literature analysis and tabulated comparison of language provision in 84 countries, however, Zein produces some critically important common messages and findings which advance the case for a common representation of the field:

- Despite widespread affirmation of the advantage of an early start to language study, factors other than any presumed or actual age advantage determine what is actually implemented;
- In recent years a considerable number of countries have reduced the teaching of a primary foreign language teaching, including English, or pushed it to the secondary level;



- Policymakers seem to reject the advice to increase instruction time, as measured in weekly hours allocated to the second language;
- Policymakers “develop policies that contradict scholarly evidence”;
- Scholarship has neglected many critical areas of ELL, favouring studies which concentrate on English.

The disproportionate focus on English diminishes our ability to draw conclusions or identify patterns that hold true for literally millions of children enrolled in early language learning in subnational languages of identity and home but also in the official languages of their countries. The focus on English also diverts attention away from important issues to do with other world languages: Arabic, English, German, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, and national/regional languages. The present volume is a major corrective to these research omissions.

The language education endeavour is highly differentiated even within a single polity, where various ideological motives may be at play, as exemplified in the US. At the same time because Spanish is promoted as a ‘marketable commodity’, national security agendas are mobilised to promote (mostly utilitarian) teaching of other languages, complicating programme offerings and impacting ‘heritage maintenance’.

I discussed these same multiple dilemmas in relation to the US (Lo Bianco, 2008, 2019a, b) regarding how policymakers have occasionally manipulated a ‘resource’ justification for language study, especially in ‘tense times’ (2008) when national security concerns overwhelm public education priorities. There is also a separate but equally contestable tendency of public policy experts to displace the specific demands and needs of minority language maintenance into a generalised, non-specific, universal provision (2019a, b). The effect is to offer foreign languages to English speakers and discriminate against minority communities’ desires for heritage language maintenance.

Zein’s depth and range of citation and extracting of critical debates, ideas and findings injects into the volume a coherence it would otherwise lack, further reinforced by the reference all the case study chapters make to a common language-in-education framework. Influenced by the conceptual and empirical framing supplied by Zein, the case studies provide ample support and validation for the ‘common messages’: that despite persuasive accounts of early start advantages, what actually is implemented is shaped by operational, political or administrative factors; that in the very recent past there has been a tapering off in commitment to early start initiatives; that policymakers seem particularly oblivious or resistant to some research findings (especially to increased instruction time and language diversification); and that policymakers often implement programmes that contradict academic research findings.

Five case studies address English in Japan, Serbia, Tanzania, Mexico and Argentina. Historically, Japanese LP has stressed the twin goals of adherence to universal Japanese language proficiency and English as a widely taught second language, a pattern punctuated by moments of intense debate about the status of English, including proposals to declare it co-official with Japanese, and a slowly



emerging realization of the multilingual demography of the country. Butler's analysis centres on developments in 2020 extending English as an academic subject at the fifth- and sixth-grade levels, reflecting a milder dose of the 'English fever' that South Korea has contracted. In Butler's account, such centralising policy may have the unintended and perverse effect of increasing inequality in the face of existing social-economic disparities in Japanese society. She makes use of the notion of *overemphasis* to show English proficiency has come to assume a gatekeeping function, mediating students' access to higher education, since it influences college admissions regardless of actual student English needs in careers or study trajectory.

English also predominates in the analysis by Filipović and Djurić of the socialist perspective informing Serbia's LP choices (which had traditionally favoured 'equal linguistic opportunity for all ethnicities'), the declarative content of policy, and the contrast of these with the less elevated realities of policy implementation, characterised by a top-down imposition style of policymaking. The Serbian education system has come to privilege English and 'either subtractive bilingualism resulting in minority groups being denied access to higher education or a growing language shift to Serbian'. The politically driven decisions which both chapters discuss show how principles derived from specialist academic literature regarding programme design and curriculum are contradicted in pragmatic policymaking, putting at risk the likely effectiveness of the policies. Macro-level language education policy analysis reveals that multiple actors have a stake in language policy, and academic specialists are pitted against these and prevailing forms of managerialism, both of which disenfranchise teacher voices and deplete the endeavour of language education of responsiveness to student learning needs and more generally of innovation and experimentation.

The more dialogical character of policy envisaged by these scholars is premised on the idea that educational contexts can be made to satisfy the learning needs of students and involvement of families and localities in more effective ways that would not stifle multilingual realities and non-instrumental goals for language study.

Tibategeza and du Plessis discuss the radically different context of early English learning in highly multilingual Tanzania. In its post-colonial context, Tanzania opted for Kiswahili, which is widely used among its citizens but retained, and even expanded the presence of English in education and society. Kiswahili has served as the sole medium of instruction at the primary level, with English replacing it as the sole medium of instruction at secondary and post-secondary levels. The authors criticise this division for its limited conceptual grasp of how bilingualism and bilingual literacy develop. Recent aspirations to extend English to the primary level (Education and Training Policy, 2014) but make Kiswahili the main medium of instruction at all levels of education might be unrealistic in the face of resource constraints, and especially difficult in light of teachers' English proficiency.

Moving beyond the impasse of sector-exclusive language towards the imagined goal of a fully bilingual citizenry will require micro-level policies as well as coherent macro-level policy guidance, and beyond education to include thinking about the social functions of the two languages and the wider multilingualism of the society.

Cristina Banfi and Raymond Day focus on English learning in Argentina. Despite efforts from 2006 to ensure mandated coverage of languages across schooling, English predominates over local alternatives, French, Italian and Portuguese. The authors show how recent explicit policy statements reveal an essentially ad hoc curriculum development process and similar inconsistent approaches to teacher education. Compounding the problem of policy drift with practice is the reality of teaching in the country marked by low remuneration, poor conditions and low social status. Additionally, although language reforms stipulate an ‘intercultural and plurilingual approach...[and] a social justice conceptualisation’, this appears unachievable under prevailing economic and social conditions for education in the country. Pressured to teach in multiple institutions, teachers tend to develop only fragmented connection with individual settings and face heavy and demanding work schedules.

Laura García-Landa examines early English learning policy in Mexico which still carries features of its origins as a language for children of diplomats that is promoted across social strata with neoliberal reasoning in recent decades. This account exposes the absence of any coherent integration of these main language study trajectories: class-based appeal of English, the separate but interacting national agitation for indigenous language rights, and similarly disconnected advocacy on behalf of other foreign languages. Hence, Mexico has become a ‘site of linguistic contestation’ marked by hegemonical Spanish, intergenerational vitality loss for indigenous and native languages, and the growing commercial and utilitarian attraction of English. However, the deprived material conditions of many Mexican public primary schools, in which English has now gained a strong presence, mean that teachers have little power to deliver quality programmes for poor and disadvantaged students. In effect, Mexico’s early English programming is marked by high demand, uneven implementation, variable results and systemic failure in programme design and teacher provision.

Grace Yue Qi looks at the teaching and learning of Mandarin in Australia and New Zealand in the context of its strong policy promotion to new learners and strenuous maintenance efforts by a diverse diaspora drawn from both new and long-standing migration. She reports the strong growth and enthusiasm for enrolment in Chinese language programmes in the two countries and a range of innovations and research efforts. Propelled by these contextual facts and by strong meso-level advocacy, the author documents challenges for mainstream curriculum policy as mainstream and complementary offerings in Mandarin enjoy a boom. Despite community multilingualism (over 300 in Australia and approximately 64 in New Zealand), policymakers exhibit a stubborn ‘monolingual mindset’ which holds back innovation, expansion and quality improvements. The author reveals a New Zealand linguistic environment characterised by language shift to English, in spite of official status and revitalisation effort on behalf of *te reo Māori* and a second language effort delivered through a differentiated ecology of multiple providers which are not, however, effectively coordinated. In the Australian case, although jurisdictional differences hamper coordination, Mandarin has seen strong growth but persisting complications about background language status of learners, for a language that both has a community presence and is taught as a foreign language to complete

beginners. The author calls for Mandarin-supporting LP to be expressed within overarching multilingual LPs for all learners, to foster intercultural awareness and consolidate the multilingual ecologies of both nations.

Another analysis of Chinese in multiple settings is tackled by Evelia Romano, Yu Hwa (Gabriela) Wu and Helena Liu, who discuss Mandarin teaching in Argentina, Chile and Paraguay. While the discussion focuses on Chinese, the countries differ radically in their linguistic demography, and these language ecologies influence what is possible and pursued in policy, including multigenerational Chinese communities.

Based on directly collected information and documentary sources, the authors look at language practices, beliefs and management policy, revealing that Mandarin at the early elementary stage is a recent development in Argentina, long-standing and explicitly promoted in Chile, but radically different in Paraguay because of its existing bilingual status between Guaraní and Spanish. In no case was there a comprehensive all-language policy, so three decades of recognition of indigenous languages has proceeded separately from foreign language policy. Foreign language education emerged not from community agitation but from an official desire for a timetabled compulsory subject from fourth or fifth grade, although Paraguay and Argentina have sought to expand English into the earliest primary years and even into preschool. In Paraguay and Argentina, Chinese teaching has been mainly community-driven, responding to migration from Taiwan and mainland China, while Chile has pursued a strategy of centralised top-down promotion.

Two case studies look at Spanish. Adriana Raquel Diaz focuses on Spanish in Australia, comparing Queensland to the national educational scene. Despite a short history in Australian public education, Spanish is currently enjoying rapid expansion through migration, trade connections, education exchanges and travel links, mainly with South America. Diaz looks into 'intercultural understanding' in curriculum documents to link the framing of Spanish both as an object of teaching in community language programmes and as a vehicle potentially generative of cross-linguistic dialogue specifically to engagement with indigenous Australians and their language needs, demands and programmes. Teaching for intercultural understanding beyond a single language and its cultural milieu requires rethinking teacher preparation, conceptual clarification of language/culture relations, and extensive programme innovation.

Maria Coady, Hyunjin Jinna Kim and Nidza Marichal address the acquisition of Spanish by young learners in the United States. The authors show how, despite the proliferation of national policies from the mid-twentieth century and state policies to support young learners and programming in Florida, the US lacks coherent, holistic, languages-in-education thinking sensitive to communication ecology. Despite the large scale of Spanish teaching, it is highly differentiated according to jurisdiction, period of time, migration history, local language ecology and the degree of impact of local English-only politics. Policy tells only part of the story; despite many provisions and clauses of *de jure* policy, *de facto* realities can be immovable, a fact shown clearly in Florida curriculum which can be either additive or subtractive depending on local factors. While growing numbers of schools enact

two-way immersion with additive bilingualism for Spanish- and English-speaking students, Spanish speakers constitute the largest minoritised language group in the US and experience the lowest rate of educational attainment and school readiness.

Hamid and Ali shift the focus of discussion to the teaching of another world language, Arabic, in the context of Bangladesh. The authors show that the prospects for Arabic are shaped by how it is positioned in global education trends that stress language teaching as preparation for competing in globally connected marketplaces of employment. The policy documents that determine education are shown to rely on 'neoliberal' reasoning, an ideological approach largely associated with English. Hamid and Ali show that Arabic also benefits from economic rationales and for similar linguistic entrepreneurial reasons, despite the fact that some 90% of Bangladeshis are Muslims for whom Arabic has a principally religious significance. However, recent demands for secularisation in Bangladeshi society, combined with strong promotion of English and the abiding and deep association of national identity with the Bangla language, greatly restrict the scope for Arabic. In effect, the authors reveal a sociolinguistic landscape and language education policy choices which relegate Arabic to the *madrassa* curriculum, the religious stream of the wider curriculum. Even at primary-level *madrassas* Arabic must negotiate its place alongside Bangla and English, resulting in its relatively minor presence there in terms of teaching hours.

Ruwaida Abu Rass discusses Arabic in Israel, where it enjoys official language status alongside Hebrew and is the main language of communication for 20% of Israel's population. The paper shows the inconsistent policy for Arabic, caught up in the vicissitudes of political conflict, the status of Palestine, and tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbours, grounded in an historical overview of policies and politics on Arabic under Ottoman Empire rule (1516–1917), the British Mandate until 1948, and the creation of the state of Israel.

In this analysis a plethora of pragmatic issues are identified as influencing how extensively and effectively Arabic is taught to young learners, but its 'status' is ultimately key to establishing early Arabic securely within Israeli public education.

Hazel Crichton discusses the policy fortunes and educational representation of German in language education across the four countries of the United Kingdom. She draws on the *superdiversity* concept to describe multiple kinds of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and migration experiences encountered in large globally connected urban centres, facilitated by instantaneous communication and a depiction of multilingual and multimodal pluralism.

Crichton shows how UK countries also respond to their indigenous languages to varying degrees, to mother tongue support for immigrant children and world languages, previously favouring official European Union languages. The recent surge in Spanish and promotion of Mandarin place German teaching in an acute competitively precarious position, with challenges from multiple sources and, particularly in the UK, a complacency effect due to the global role of English in twenty-first century affairs. Lack of coordinated implementation and ad hoc measures in language planning across the jurisdictions and problematic attitudes in teacher education hamper effective approaches to early learning, which need clear coordination

so that promising innovations and valuable practices can be replicated systematically, minimising waste and duplication.

### **Framework: LP = A3 × P4 > G6**

The smorgasbord of implementation-level analysis of widely spoken or ‘world’ languages in compulsory school primary curricula (Arabic, English, German, Kiswahili, Mandarin and Spanish) in the context of existing ecologies and local dominant language ecologies (Lo Bianco & Aronin, 2020) raises two levels of comparative discussion: linguistic and jurisdictional. The common analytical framework applied to the case studies enhances comparability, covering typical national and subnational settings in Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Chile, Israel, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, Serbia, Tanzania, the UK and the US. However, early learning claims for world languages on LP must make reference to existing societal and classroom multilingualism, competitive policy demands, and the pragmatics of local ecologies, essentially the difference between the penetration of Chinese into early years in Argentina and Chile compared to Paraguay, and Arabic in Bangladesh compared to Israel.

Strategies offered by case study authors often centre on forms of discursive reconstitution of languages, essentially how the linguistic ideologies attaching to and fostering/circumscribing their presence in early years education can be remade. A specific example relates to how Arabic should be reconceived as an integral component of an expanded communication ecology in Bangladesh, one that could foster and be harnessed for identity and social cohesion, combined with utilitarian and instrumental rationales, as discussed by Hamid and Ali.

This section puts forward a framework for LP that I developed as a result of engagement with concrete LP writing in settings in Australia, South-East Asia, Europe and North America. I describe the approach briefly (paraphrased from Lo Bianco, 2018). Not all areas impinge on ELL, but they are retained here to ensure the integrity of the overall framework.

In its pioneering phase, language planning was directed towards newly independent post-colonial states adopting new national languages to serve administrative and national agendas. In this era, academic LP studies were characterised by optimism, imagining LP as a science of rational approach to planned language change. One scholar goes so far as to see LP studies as a unitary field ‘that seeks to foster ethnic interaction, world communication, and national identity’ (Eastman, 1983, p. 126). Progressively it became clear that LP is pursued by different groups for different purposes; its aims and philosophies are heterogeneous rather than unitary, and it cannot be seen as a technical science above reproach, guided by common objectives (Lo Bianco, 2010a). Language policy is best conceived of as iterative discourse between academic researchers, communities of speakers (users, signers, writers) and public authorities, preferably using democratic and collegial modes of

interaction. In reality, the majority of LPs in the world involve top-down imposition of official languages, with little community or academic input.

A snapshot characterisation of LP, deepening the foregoing discussion, reveals a dynamic activity that can be represented as  $LP = A3 \times P4 > G6$  (Lo Bianco, 2018).

A3 refers to three spheres of authority (A). These provide the politico-legal legitimation to planned language change and are achieved through four characteristic modes of participation (P4). The A3 authority and P4 participation modes are typically directed towards six goals (G6). These are the intended outcomes of LP and link to the dimensions of policy as what is implemented and how it is experienced, as discussed earlier. While language changes in unplanned ways, sometimes imperceptibly and sometimes rapidly, LP refers to deliberate, explicit and conscious effort made with the aim of changing language, and my aim with this framework is to encapsulate the widest possible schematic representation of planned language change.

### *Three Authorisations*

Missing from many LP formulations is a theory of power and interests, with their connection to politico-legal settings. I call these authorisations and identify three recurring ones:

- *Sovereignty*: political agents use their exclusive political authority to direct state law-making or coercive power towards language change;
- *Jurisdiction*: meaning devolved sovereignty, such as an education system or municipal council that works using the authority granted to it by a sovereign source;
- *Influence*: refers to how actors, insiders and outsiders use their agency or political power to shape the form and content of LP. Influence operates in two broad ways, *legitimately* (within the decision-making systems of a polity) and *transgressively* (in which agents undermine or subvert established power systems).

LP requires authorisation, which is why it occurs and how it is legitimised in the polity in which it occurs. Sovereignty and jurisdiction are established forms of power-authorising change in language, while influence accounts for the many instances in which change occurs against or in opposition to established forms of authority.

A LP that achieves its authority via influence is when agents mobilise power in economic markets or political and cultural domains. Academics, for example, might achieve significant media coverage for a new early language learning scheme or a critical evaluation of a new language learning method. A community of speakers of an endangered language might change policy or thinking to address their needs by building a political coalition that forces established power brokers to address their issues.

I have often described authority as a container. On page 40 of my 2018 discussion of this question, I describe the policy container as follows:

Just as water takes the shape of the container into which it is poured, LP, change or anti-change, is shaped by the authorizations governing the particular settings in which the LP arises. A municipal plan to provide road safety information multilingually relies on devolved legal responsibility, delivered programmatically and typically devoid of romantic nationalist rhetoric. By contrast, a secessionist language revival movement rhetorically contests official representations of itself, marshals discourses of historical legitimacy, or natural justice, and performs some of the change it seeks. (Lo Bianco, 2018, p. 40)

### ***Four Modes of Participation***

The second cluster of forces and factors that we can identify in LP are the modes of participation. I have observed four characteristic modes of participation through which the three authorisations are activated. These four modes are described in what follows with the typical actors engaged in these containers: political, professional, or civil or dissident actors:

- *Public texts*: refers to laws and official documents produced by political actors, legal agents or public officials and consultants entrusted with these roles;
- *Public discourse*: refers to arguments and pressure in public life, such as the rhetoric of government and the possibly contesting rhetoric of citizen groups, but also evidence and opinion by experts, including academics;
- *Performative action*: refers to the modelling of language by powerful individuals or institutions, such as cultural celebrities, or language change arising through technological innovation;
- *Deliberative process*: facilitation through expert-guided decision-making and agreement.

### ***Six Goals***

Typically, LP activity proceeding through a form of authority (A3) and its corresponding mode of participation (P4) aims to bring about a language change (G6), often for non-linguistic objectives, mentioned but not described here:

- elevate the *status* of a language, commonly called status planning;
- modify, usually to modernise the linguistic *corpus* of a language, its spelling conventions or lexis;
- promote *acquisition*: the examples of early learning in this volume fit here;
- expand *usage* of a language, usually overcoming past policies in which languages were forced to recede into private/domestic contexts;



- elevate the *prestige* of a language, aiming to gain more esteem for a whole language or aspects of it;
- generate or naturalise *discourse* about language ideologies, attitudes and beliefs.

## Conclusion

The third wave of commitment to ELL (Johnstone, 2009) and its prospects for success, documented and assembled in this comprehensive treatment by Zein and Coady and case study authors, is a phenomenon with many years of life left to run, differentiated according to geography, social class and the particular language ecologies of different contexts. Full analysis will require expansive LP analytical perspectives that are attentive to the forms of authorisation that the policies derive from, how various actors have participated in generating the specific policy being enacted and what specific goals and outcomes are anticipated.

In real-world policymaking, policies aim to solve practical problems or are expressed as efforts to compensate for past neglect of the problem. As argued earlier with reference to histories of nationalism, language problems tend to be ‘wicked’ rather than tame. Wicked problems are complicated, long lasting and multidimensional (Lo Bianco, 2010a, b) because they involve the subjectivity of speaker communities who identify with particular language traditions or aspects of language, including scripts. These attachments invest debates about languages with emotion, sometimes with grievance and always according to the identity attachments and desires of community groups. For this reason, robust LP analysis should acknowledge the specific context and history in which LP problems become the object of policy writing activity.

Another feature of language problems that complicates LP is the collective ownership of languages, which are the property of their users, and the behaviour of speakers or signers, which can render them untouchable by policymaking officials and systems. Without the active cooperation of language users, especially in language revitalisation efforts for endangered languages, even technically well-designed policy is unlikely to succeed in achieving its goals. This lends LP a deeply democratic and dialogical character.

This is one reason why many LPs fail – because policymakers often treat language problem resolution as a merely technical exercise. Assessments of the effectiveness of LP have noted that LP tends to have weak traction, especially when confined to legal or education-only implementation. Significantly, a pioneering researcher in LP studies, Filipino Brother Andrew Gonzalez, once stated that ‘benign neglect is better than deliberate language planning’ (Hau & Tinio, 2003, p. 337). Since this pessimistic assessment was made, it has been true to say that the LP design and process has become more robust and effective. Nevertheless, the wicked problems language poses to policymakers require us to bear these caveats in mind.

The 13 chapters of this volume are dense with reflection and analysis about diverse geopolitical settings embarking on ELL policies. They bring us closer to a practice of LP where implementation will actually work.

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# Correction to: Where Have Personnel Policies on Early English Language Learning Taken Us in Mexico So Far?



Laura García-Landa

**Correction to:**  
**Chapter 10 in: S. Zein, M. R. Coady (eds.), *Early Language Learning Policy in the 21st Century*, Language Policy 26,**  
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The book was inadvertently published with incorrect last name of the author. The last name of the author has now been corrected in the chapter 10.

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The updated version of the chapter can be found at  
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