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Invisible Educational Stakeholders in Language Planning and Policy *

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ABSTRACT: *This article aims to present a state-of-the-art overview of language planning and policy, with particular emphasis on the implementation of language policies related to English language learning on a global scale, as well as the stakeholders involved in managing these policies. This research is grounded in personal experiences as an English teacher in public schools and various universities in Bogotá, where I have observed the implementation processes firsthand. Through these experiences, I have recognized numerous changes, contradictions, successes, and shortcomings in language policy. A review of over 60 research articles on language policies worldwide reveals two significant trends. The first trend concerns the trajectories of language policies implemented across different countries over time. The second trend highlights the predominant portrayal of teachers as the primary educational stakeholders. However, this focus often leads to the marginalization of other key actors. As a result, there is a noticeable lack of information about the involvement of other agents in the implementation process and the dynamics among them, which are essential for achieving the goals set by language policies.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Language planning, language policies, educational stakeholders.

LOS ACTORES EDUCATIVOS INVISIBLES EN LA PLANIFICACIÓN Y LA POLÍTICA LINGÜÍSTICA

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar una visión general del estado actual de la planificación y política lingüística, con un énfasis particular en la implementación de políticas lingüísticas relacionadas con el aprendizaje del idioma inglés a escala global, así como en los actores involucrados en la gestión de estas políticas. Esta investigación se basa en experiencias personales como profesor de inglés en escuelas públicas y diversas universidades de*

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* Review Article. Implementation processes: creation, interpretation, implementation, and appropriation processes.

Bogotá, donde he observado los procesos de implementación de primera mano. A través de estas experiencias, he reconocido numerosos cambios, contradicciones, éxitos y deficiencias en la política lingüística. Una revisión de más de 60 artículos de investigación sobre políticas lingüísticas en todo el mundo revela dos tendencias significativas. La primera tendencia se refiere a las trayectorias de las políticas lingüísticas implementadas en diferentes países a lo largo del tiempo. La segunda tendencia destaca la representación predominante de los profesores como los principales actores educativos. Sin embargo, este enfoque a menudo conduce a la marginación de otros actores clave. Como resultado, existe una notable falta de información sobre la participación de otros agentes en el proceso de implementación y las dinámicas entre ellos, que son esenciales para lograr los objetivos establecidos por las políticas lingüísticas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Planificación lingüística, políticas lingüísticas, partes interesadas en la educación

PARTES INTERESSADAS EDUCACIONAIS INVISÍVEIS NO PLANEJAMENTO E NA POLÍTICA LINGUÍSTICA

RESUMO: *Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar uma visão geral de última geração do planejamento e da política linguística, com ênfase particular na implementação de políticas linguísticas relacionadas ao aprendizado da língua inglesa em escala global, bem como as partes interessadas envolvidas no gerenciamento dessas políticas. Esta pesquisa é baseada em experiências pessoais como professor de inglês em escolas públicas e várias universidades em Bogotá, onde observei os processos de implementação em primeira mão. Por meio dessas experiências, reconheci inúmeras mudanças, contradições, sucessos e deficiências na política linguística. Uma revisão de mais de 60 artigos de pesquisa sobre políticas linguísticas em todo o mundo revela duas tendências significativas. A primeira tendência diz respeito às trajetórias das políticas linguísticas implementadas em diferentes países ao longo do tempo. A segunda tendência destaca a representação predominante dos professores como as principais partes interessadas educacionais. No entanto, esse foco geralmente leva à marginalização de outros atores-chave. Como resultado, há uma notável falta de informações sobre o envolvimento de outros agentes no processo de implementação e a dinâmica entre eles, que são essenciais para atingir as metas definidas pelas políticas linguísticas.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Planejamento linguístico, políticas linguísticas, partes interessadas na educação.

INTRODUCTION

Language planning and policy is a complex and ever-evolving field, continuously shaped and redefined over time. Given that language policies have been present in every country since the inception of civilization, it becomes crucial to update the existing knowledge in this area and to gain a deeper understanding of the current landscape. Additionally, it is important to identify the underexplored areas within language policies and propose new avenues for research, particularly those related to the field of education. This approach is vital to improving the outcomes of initiatives such as the National Bilingualism Program. For this reason, the first section of this article is dedicated to exploring the theoretical underpinnings of language policy. Understanding the evolution of its terminology, objectives, processes, levels, and the stakeholders involved is essential for contextualizing the field.

To establish a state-of-the-art overview, a comprehensive bibliographic review was conducted, examining over 60 research articles. Two clear trends emerged from this analysis. The first trend shows that a significant portion of the literature focuses on tracing the trajectories of language policies implemented in various countries. The second trend highlights that teachers are frequently portrayed as the sole educational stakeholders responsible for policy implementation. In the second section of this review, I present a wide-ranging analysis of laws and regulations concerning language policies from different countries. This analysis provides insight into how governmental objectives and historical contexts shape the formulation of these regulations. Additionally, it examines the introduction of the English language into

different national contexts and identifies the educational stakeholders mentioned in the literature.

In the third section, I delve into the evolution of language policies in Colombia, given that this context is most closely aligned with my own experiences. As in the previous section, particular attention is given to the role of educational stakeholders involved in the implementation processes.

This comprehensive analysis enables readers to compare theoretical frameworks of language policy with their practical application across different countries, thus fostering a better understanding of language policy management. It also sheds light on the position and recognition of various educational stakeholders within these processes.

LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING OVERVIEW

When exploring language policies, researchers often encounter a range of new, evolving, and sometimes confusing terms. For instance, language planning, language policy, language policy and planning, education policies in language, and bilingual policy all differ in their focus but share certain similarities. An analysis of language policy processes reveals terms such as creation, interpretation, implementation, and evaluation, alongside others like adoption, adaptation, and appropriation. Additionally, stakeholders operate across various levels—macro, meso, and micro. Given the complexity of the field, it is crucial to clarify terminology in alignment with its historical development.

To begin, it is essential to review the evolution of terminology to better understand the distinctions between these concepts. The terms "language planning", "language policy", and "language policy and planning" belong to the field of sociolinguistics, which studies language in relation to society. These terms have evolved over time, often being used interchangeably. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), "language policies" refer to rules and regulations governing language use within communities, while "language planning" encompasses the ideas, policies, beliefs, and practices aimed at effecting planned changes in language use.

However, García (2015) highlights that the initial term used was "language planning" which was primarily concerned with state-led efforts to promote systematic linguistic change. With the advent of poststructuralist and critical studies, the term shifted to "language policy" which recognizes the multiple forces influencing language behaviors, such as practices, beliefs, and regulations. García further notes that the current terminology, "language policy and planning" encompasses not only the formal rules set by authoritative bodies but also the behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes toward language within society.

Years later, Kucukoglu (2012) expanded on the complexities of language policy by examining historical examples where different policies influenced stakeholders in varied ways. Building on Corson's (1999) perspective, Kucukoglu describes language policy as a set of nationally agreed-upon principles that guide decision-makers in making informed and balanced language-related decisions. Similarly, Djite (1994) emphasizes the role of governments in shaping the relationship between language and society, particularly through educational policies. Liddicoat (2004) further explores how language planning in education affects the interaction between language and social life, thus underscoring the significance of education and bilingual policies.

Tollefson provides a critical perspective, suggesting that language policy serves as a mechanism for positioning language within social structures, determining access to political power and economic resources, and allowing dominant groups to establish hegemony in language use (García, 2015). This perspective highlights the role of power in language policy, influencing the social, political, and economic development of communities.
More recently, Shohamy (2009) and Spolsky (2004) define language policy as a combination of planned and unplanned, official and unofficial, overt and covert interventions that influence language beliefs and usage across different sociocultural contexts. This broader definition reflects the complex and dynamic nature of the field, which continues to evolve.

These varying definitions allow us to identify the shifting objectives of language policy over time, ranging from modernizing a language, adapting to technological advancements, standardizing linguistic forms, fostering national unity, or even creating a written form for previously unwritten languages (Kaplan, 1997). Ricento and Hornberger (1996) describe language policy as a multifaceted and layered endeavor without a unified theory, distinguishing between "policy planning" (form-oriented) and "cultivation planning" (function-oriented). They categorize the field into three types: status

planning, acquisition planning, and corpus planning, each with specific objectives.

Furthermore, this field is categorized into three types: status planning, acquisition planning, and corpus planning, each addressing different objectives based on these approaches. Corpus planning focuses on changes in the form and structure of a language through processes like standardization. Status planning, on the other hand, examines shifts in the role and prestige of a language within a society. Over time, language planning expanded to include the study of teaching foreign or second languages and the use of a language as a medium of instruction, with the aim of promoting language maintenance or language reacquisition. This approach is known as acquisition planning (García, 2015).

These types of planning encompass four primary processes: creation, interpretation, implementation, and evaluation. Recent studies have identified three additional processes—adoption, adaptation, and appropriation—that may occur before the evaluation phase, depending on community contexts.

Numerous agents operate at various levels within the processes of language policy and planning. Effective collaboration among these stakeholders is essential to improve policy development and implementation outcomes. As previously mentioned, language policies are structured across different levels: macro, meso, and micro. Unfortunately, over the past twenty years, research has predominantly focused on the macro level, while exploration at the micro level remains limited. According to Kaplan (1997), this gap in the literature may be due to a perceived lack of prestige associated with micro-level analysis (p. 52).

Macro-level policies are typically managed by government agencies such as Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, and education authorities at the national, state, and local levels. Meso-level stakeholders include language agencies, civil service courts, and secretaries of education. Meanwhile, the micro level encompasses organizations like schools and educational institutions. These levels are interconnected throughout the stages of policy creation, interpretation, implementation, and appropriation, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to language policy planning.

The macro level is responsible for the formulation of language policies, while the meso level manages their interpretation, where policies may be altered as they move through various administrative layers—either through revisions in newly drafted documents or reinterpretations of existing ones (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 417). The micro level, in turn, focuses on the implementation and appropriation processes. Notably, micro-level agents include teachers, students, and parents. In practice, these stakeholders often find themselves in the position of implementing decisions made by "experts" in government, education boards, or central administration, with their perspectives and contributions frequently considered only as an afterthought (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 417).

However, language policy planning also involves other educational stakeholders who play a complementary role in supporting the implementation and appropriation processes. As Ricento and Hornberger (1996) explain, English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals—whether they are teachers, program developers, materials and textbook writers, administrators, consultants, or academics—are actively engaged in this endeavor (p. 408). These stakeholders promote the adoption of language policies by providing resources and materials that encourage teachers, students, and parents to implement and appropriate the proposed policies.

Kaplan (1997) provides a clear perspective on this issue, emphasizing that language policy formulation is a collective responsibility. He argues that, without the active engagement of both the targeted communities and the broader public, it is unlikely that a stable language ecology will develop, making sustained language change a challenging goal to achieve.

This perspective aligns with Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) observations that institutions beyond religious organizations—such as publishers, broadcast media, schools, and universities—play significant roles as policymakers, evaluators, opinion leaders, gatekeepers, and, at times, perpetuators of the existing social order (p. 416). These institutions not only drive the implementation of government-formulated language policies but also, in some cases, contribute to the creation of new policies as they address emerging challenges and seek solutions to problematic situations.

By examining the relationship between stakeholders and the language policy process, we can assess whether specific management strategies are in place. Kaplan (1997) suggests that language policy adopts an ecosystem approach, which serves as a proactive strategy for managing these processes. He references

the model proposed by Trim (1987), which distinguishes between left-branching (LB) and right-branching (RB) approaches. According to Kaplan, "LB implies a view of society as a vast, intricate mechanism into which individuals are inserted" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 304). In this model, language planners determine what actions should be taken, who should execute them, and how they should be carried out.

In contrast, "RB seems to view human resource development as individuals developing their own language resources for their own purposes" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 304). The LB approach uses society as its unit, organizing a centralized framework for language policy planning, whereas the RB approach focuses on the individual, allowing for numerous personal decisions that lead to decentralized, organic language policy development. According to Kaplan, LB represents a top-down approach, while RB reflects a bottom-up strategy. However, language policy management does not flow exclusively in top-down or bottom-up directions; rather, it also moves laterally among various stakeholders. In this context, power relationships can manifest in multiple ways, resembling a dynamic pyramid where influence flows both from the top down and vice versa. Often, these relationships are depicted as static branches on either side, yet the reality is far more complex. The implementation of language policies involves intricate dynamics, where forces push and resist in various directions with varying intensities. Moreover, power relations are not always linear, as "speakers have agency, and language policy interacts with global, national, and local ideologies" (García, 2015, p. 355).

Thus, the dynamics between stakeholders can be likened to a flexible branch that moves in various directions with differing intensities, reflecting the diverse contexts, perspectives, interests, and worldviews of those involved. The process of language policy implementation can be metaphorically represented by a climbing plant that is far from static. Like a plant driven by tropism, it grows in multiple directions, adapting to external stimuli. It remains flexible, exerting and resisting forces, with numerous agents contributing throughout this organic and ever-evolving process.

As demonstrated, language planning involves complex organizational levels, processes, and agents, all of which interact dynamically and play a crucial role in shaping society. However, in this literature review, the focus will be specifically on the micro and meso levels, concentrating on educational stakeholders directly connected to schools. This includes parents, students, teachers, coordinators, principals, administrative officers, secretaries of education, and the Ministry of Education.

LANGUAGE POLICIES AND EDUCATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS AROUND THE WORLD

After clarifying the processes, levels, and stakeholders involved in language policy, this section provides an overview of how various countries worldwide have approached the creation, implementation, and appropriation of language policies, considering their social, religious, and economic contexts. This analysis focuses particularly on micro-level agents, examining how the English language became essential and how it was introduced in each nation.

Language policies have been a global phenomenon since the beginning of civilization, with each country navigating these processes differently throughout history. The objectives of language policies have shifted in response to changing government priorities, whether they be religious, economic, social, political, or academic. For instance, Kucukoglu (2012) highlights the case of Turkey, noting that "traditional language policy during the Ottoman Empire was shaped by Islamic culture. The primary goal of the education policy at that time was to teach the language and educate religious scholars who could better understand their faith. Although the official government language was Turkish, foreign languages such as Arabic and Persian were also taught" (p. 1091). Subsequently, the Turkish government shifted its focus from religious objectives to economic and social goals. The introduction of the English language during the Tanzimat Period was primarily aimed at enhancing economic relations and promoting the Westernization of the education system. According to Kucukoglu (2012), English was introduced as a tool for communication and interaction. It became a compulsory subject starting in the 4th grade; however, the instructional approach was predominantly centered on translation and grammar methods.

However, as noted by Kinsiz, Ozenici, and Demir (2013), in Turkey, there is a lack of oversight regarding decisions made at the micro-level, as well as insufficient support for teachers. Additionally, material resources are lacking, and there are significant issues within the curriculum. These challenges hinder the effectiveness of English language teaching and learning. The literature on Turkey reveals that there is limited information about

the involvement of various educational stakeholders, with teachers often being portrayed as the sole agents responsible for implementing language policy.

Historically, the focus of language policy and planning has varied significantly. It has been driven by religious motives, as in the case of Turkey, or political objectives, as seen in several European countries. In these European contexts, the political aim was often to unify the population by imposing a single language, as in France, England, and Spain. For instance, as Moore (2015) notes, prior to the French Revolution, the country was fragmented into numerous provinces, each with its own dialects and traditions. However, in 1794, the French government introduced a language policy based on the belief that "ignorance of the national language—or even just 'imperfect knowledge' of it—was a barrier to the liberty and happiness of citizens, and an impediment to the glory of the Republic" (p. 21). Consequently, all citizens were required to speak only French, as they were considered to have "the fortune to be French" (National Convention 1794, as cited in Moore, 2015, p. 21). Other languages and dialects were systematically suppressed through discrimination and mistreatment. The decree from the National Convention did not view linguistic diversity as an asset, but rather as a source of division and potential threat to national unity.

This language policy led to the discrimination of regional languages, as reflected in statements like: "Federalism and superstition speak Breton; emigration and hatred for the Republic speak German; the counter-revolution speaks Italian, and fanaticism speaks Basque. Let us break these instruments of damage and error!" (Flaherty, 1987, p. 319, as cited in Moore, 2015, p. 22). Meanwhile, Pouly (2012) notes that English was introduced in France primarily by English nurses and private tutors who served the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, making it accessible only to select social groups. According to Pouly, English was initially acquired through natural teaching methods within these elite circles. However, after 1830, English began to be taught in public educational institutions, driven by the goal of facilitating international commerce and business.

A similar situation occurred in Spain, where languages such as Euskara, Catalan, Gallego, and Castellano coexisted. During Franco's regime, however, Castellano was the only officially recognized language, enforced to unify the nation. Minority languages were actively persecuted and stigmatized. As for the English language, it was initially introduced in Spain through private secondary schools. According to Fernández (2011), "In Madrid, students began to study English in institutions such as the *Real Seminario de Nobles* in 1804, the *Colegio de San Mateo* (1821-1823), and the *Ateneo*, founded in 1820" (translated by the author). Fernández (2011) further notes that interest in learning English grew significantly during the 19th century, as Spain's commercial relations with England and the United States expanded. Thus, the primary motivation for learning English shifted from political interests to economic objectives, particularly in the context of international business.

After examining the cases of France and Spain, I turned my attention to the United Kingdom, especially given that English has become the dominant language taught worldwide. As its name suggests, the United Kingdom is a union of different regions: Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England. However, the formation of this union was neither peaceful nor voluntary; it was driven by political decisions from England aimed at consolidating power. One of these political strategies involved the imposition of language policies that forced the population to adopt English while abandoning their native languages, such as Scottish Gaelic, Irish, Welsh, and other regional tongues. Initially, these policies were politically motivated, aimed at strengthening the kingdom's unity. Over time, however, the focus of language policies shifted towards economic objectives.

According to Ceallaigh (2020), Ireland faced an economic depression that forced many people to seek work abroad, compelling them to prioritize English over their native language for economic survival. Additionally, children became increasingly exposed to the internet and global communication channels dominated by English content, often spending more time in these environments without the influence of their native language. Although the government aimed to promote the use of the Irish language, funding for language education was limited, resulting in insufficient resources to hire qualified language teachers. This situation highlights how economic priorities frequently overshadow social and cultural objectives. This pattern is not unique to Ireland; similar inconsistencies between policy rhetoric and practical implementation are evident in South America, where a significant gap exists between the written policies and their execution.

In most South American countries, as in Europe, language policies ostensibly aim to protect linguistic diversity while promoting the acquisition of a global business language, such as English. However, in practice,

the necessary conditions to effectively safeguard native languages or support foreign language learning are often lacking. For instance, as Terborg and García (2006, as cited in Reyes et al., 2011) observe regarding English education in Mexico, "the situation is similar to that of indigenous languages; language policy is more symbolic than substantive" (p. 186, translated by the author). This indicates a disconnect between policy intentions and their practical implementation, where language policies often serve more as formal declarations than as actionable frameworks.

Turning to European countries where language policies have been driven by political objectives, one of the most complex cases is that of former Yugoslavia. According to Babic (2010), the role of language in the process of nationalism can be either politically integrative or disintegrative. For instance, the use of Spanish in Spain, French in France, and English in the United Kingdom illustrates how a language can serve to unify a nation. However, in Yugoslavia, the opposite was true. Babic (2010) notes that "in the case of Yugoslavia, language has played a very important, if not a major, role in national self-identification. The linguistically unified Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian language was used by speakers who identified themselves, in terms of ethnonationalism, as Serbs, Croats, Muslims, and Montenegrins" (p. 2). This linguistic unity, instead of fostering integration, reinforced divisions along ethnic and national lines.

Babic (2010) explains that, following the First World War, the government's aim was to establish a multinational state to preserve and foster the national (ethnic, cultural, and linguistic) identities of its diverse population, wherein Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes were seen as different tribes within a single nation. However, after the Second World War, the Novi Sad Agreement of 1954 sought to unify the Serbo-Croatian language by promoting only two regional variants—Eastern and Western. This initiative was ultimately dismantled, and Yugoslavia fragmented into five new countries, each of which had to reconstruct its own language policies (Franklin, 1979), despite sharing a common cultural background that was now divided by language. Unlike in other countries where language policies were driven by social or religious goals, the objective in Yugoslavia was strictly political. Meanwhile, English was introduced as a foreign language for business purposes and made compulsory in all schools.

The status of English as the international language of business spurred a global race among countries to develop language policies centered on English, aiming for international recognition and improved economic standing. This shift activated macro-level structures, supported by international institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI). According to Shohamy (2009), "these linguistic policies are driven by wishes and aspirations, by political and economic motivations" (p. 47), similar to what occurred in Yugoslavia with their native language policies.

In this context, it is essential to recognize that language policies function as instruments of power, allowing policymakers to impose their beliefs and ideologies, thereby reinforcing political control and influence over public perception. As Shohamy (2009) asserts, "It is clear by now that language policy (LP) is not neutral, as it represents a significant tool for political power and manipulation" (p. 21). Language policies are deeply intertwined with ideology, ecology, and management (Spolsky, 2004, as cited in Shohamy, 2009). Moreover, there are policy mechanisms that "serve as mediators between ideology and practice, effectively creating de facto policies" (Shohamy, 2009, p. 11). These mechanisms include laws, rules, regulations, and language education policies, which not only shape linguistic landscapes but also intensify and support the processes of globalization. Given the situations described above, language policies gained even greater global significance when UNESCO defined a "multilingual" individual as someone proficient in their mother tongue, national language, and a foreign language. UNESCO's recommendations emphasized the need "to identify the main lines of a language education system that adapts to the country, facilitates international communication, and preserves the inalienable linguistic and cultural heritage of each people for humanity" (UNESCO, Record of the General Conference, 1999, as cited in Reyes et al., 2011, p. 173, translated by the author). Similarly, the OECD "estimates that since English is the most widely used language in economic transactions, it serves as a competitive advantage crucial for launching businesses" (Reyes et al., 2011, p. 173, translated by the author). However, while the OECD "recognizes that a lingua franca enhances economic cooperation and interdependence, it cautions that this should not come at the expense of cultural and linguistic diversity" (Reyes et al., 2011, p. 174, translated by the author). Thus, while English may serve as a lingua franca in many countries, its use should be balanced to avoid solely pursuing economic objectives at the cost of cultural diversity.

Over time, the creation of the European Union (EU) emerged as a project that leveraged linguistic diversity as an asset, encapsulated by its motto, "Unity in Diversity." The focus of EU language policies gradually shifted from purely political objectives to economic ones. EU member states officially recognized 24 European languages and standardized language proficiency using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which categorizes language skills into levels ranging from A1 to C2. In 2009, the EU Parliament reaffirmed its commitment to multilingualism by stating that "Europeans should speak their mother tongue plus two other languages—one for business and one for pleasure" (EurActiv, March 25, 2009, as cited in Moore, 2015, p. 26).

The language designated for business is predominantly English. This shift can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution, which elevated the importance of English due to expanding economic relationships. Following the Second World War, the economic decline of the United Kingdom and the subsequent rise of the United States as a global economic superpower further solidified English as the dominant language for business.

The research articles reviewed on language policies in Europe provide a comprehensive analysis of their implementation, which was initially driven by political goals and later shifted toward economic objectives. However, these studies largely neglect to explore the roles of stakeholders involved in these processes. Although some articles briefly reference governmental bodies and teachers, they fall short of detailing their specific roles and contributions. Furthermore, the involvement of other crucial agents in language policy implementation remains unexamined.

Interestingly, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been adopted not only in Europe but also in regions such as South America, Asia, and Africa, where it serves as a model for language policy. However, driven by economic interests, governments in these regions have implemented language policies in ways that reveal striking similarities across these diverse contexts. Unfortunately, the unique conditions, cultural backgrounds, and specific needs of each country are often overlooked in the formulation of these policies, leading to a lack of contextual relevance in their application.

Policymakers often disregard the realities faced by students in terms of resources, culture, language, and geographic diversity. Nunan (2003) highlights that "considerable inequity exists in terms of access to effective English language instruction. In China, for instance, there are significant divides between the 'haves' and 'have-nots,' as well as between urban and rural areas" (p. 605). A similar situation is observed in Brazil, where "despite theoretical and discursive transformations in policy, teachers still rely on nothing more than 'board, saliva, and chalk' to implement these changes" (Pagliarini & Assis-Peterson, 2008, as cited in Montoya, 2013, translated by the author). Countries such as Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia face similar language policies and associated challenges. One major issue is the reliance on a decontextualized framework that fails to account for the unique learning processes and cultural contexts of each country, which differ significantly from those in Europe.

Meanwhile, teachers are classified to work in various institutions, schools, and universities based on the level of proficiency they have attained according to the CEFR standards. Simultaneously, students are required to follow a curriculum aligned with the CEFR, with the aim of reaching specific proficiency levels through extended hours of English instruction. However, researchers from the Global North, such as Nunan (2003), have pointed out that "teacher education and the English language skills of teachers in public-sector institutions are inadequate" (p. 606). This critique has led governments in countries like China, Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea to argue that many teachers lack the necessary proficiency in the English language, as well as the pedagogical expertise needed to effectively teach it.

In response to these challenges, some governments in Asia, Africa, and South America have adopted a strategy known as "native-speakerism." Unfortunately, this approach often fosters social classism and undermines cultural identity. In the Asia-Pacific region, for instance, some policymakers hold the belief that "investment in elementary foreign language education may well be worth it, but only if the teachers are native or native-like speakers and well-trained in the needs of younger learners" (Marinova-Todd et al., 2000, as cited in Nunan, 2003, p. 607). This perspective prioritizes native speakers, perpetuating a bias that disregards the capabilities of local educators and can have detrimental social implications.

In Latin American countries such as Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, and Colombia, the practice of bringing native

English speakers to teach reinforces the notion of English language superiority, thereby perpetuating imperialist influences. This is achieved through teacher training, imported methodologies, textbooks, materials, and certifications—many of which ultimately serve commercial interests, particularly benefiting organizations like the British Council (Le Gal, 2019). For instance, similar rhetoric can be found across various South American media outlets: in Colombia, "the Colombian Ministry of Education declared that having native speakers of English as teachers in public education 'will be vital to achieving President Santos's target of making Colombia the most educated country in the region by 2015'" (El Tiempo, January 20, 2015, as cited in González & Llurda, 2016, p. 98). Similarly, in Mexico, it was stated that "if it is necessary to bring teachers from other places to substitute them, even from countries with better educational levels, there should be no doubts" (El Universal, April 17, 2013, as cited in González & Llurda, 2016, p. 98).

This approach, upon closer examination, reveals how native-speakerism perpetuates foreign dependency and sustains colonial mechanisms of control, particularly through the lens of whiteness. It relies on the rationale that local teachers lack sufficient English proficiency, thereby justifying the need for foreign educators to achieve better outcomes in the implementation of language policies.

This literature review does not offer an exhaustive analysis of language policies in Africa. However, García (2015) highlights that, during colonial times in Ghana, students who spoke African languages were forced to wear a shaming sign as punishment. The underlying political goal of such language policies was to reinforce the power of the imperialist regime. Over time, this political objective evolved into one driven by economic and social interests, reflecting the shifting priorities of the colonial authorities.

Today, English is taught in Ghana as its official language, despite the existence of approximately 70 indigenous languages, according to studies by Ramirez and Merino (1990, as cited in Obeng, 2020). As a result, English functions as a lingua franca in the country. The language policy enforced is English-only, which has led to several challenges. Most teachers are proficient only in English and one local language, making the English-only policy more difficult to implement in diverse classroom settings (Obeng, 2020). Obeng's study is one of the few that addresses the involvement of educational stakeholders in the language policy implementation process. He identifies teachers, students, and parents as key stakeholders, emphasizing the vital role of teachers as implementers of these policies. Obeng (2020) argues that it is crucial to involve all stakeholders in the formulation of language policies to achieve effective outcomes in the nation's educational and developmental goals.

The English-only language policy, which originated in the United States, has been applied both domestically and in parts of Africa. Americans speak English as a result of colonization, similar to the historical context in Ghana. Today, however, the U.S. faces challenges related to the languages of its immigrant populations. For example, states like California, Arizona, and Massachusetts have enacted laws influenced by the English for the Children Organization, establishing "English-only" as the default language policy in public schools. However, the interpretation and implementation of this policy have varied by state.

In California, the influence of the Civil Rights Movement led to the continuation of bilingual education programs, specifically two-way immersion programs. In contrast, Arizona and Massachusetts chose to adopt anti-bilingual education policies, driven by the belief in the "popular image of the United States as a nation of immigrants, who have succeeded economically by learning English and leaving their ethnic roots behind" (Schmidt, 2000, as cited in De Jong, 2008, p. 352). Consequently, teachers in these states were required to adhere to language policies as interpreted by administrators, often regardless of their own beliefs or preferences.

In this context, teachers are not the sole educational stakeholders involved in implementing language policies, and the process extends beyond their direct control. In reality, many other stakeholders operate behind the scenes, contributing to the implementation process. Therefore, teachers should not be viewed as the only ones accountable for the success of language policies. As Ester De Jong (2008) emphasizes: "In this view, administrators and teachers are not merely executors of policy but are positioned as active constructors of practices, shaped by their interpretations of policies within their specific contexts and experiences" (Cohen & Ball, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1990; McLaughlin, 1987; Olsen & Kirtman, 2002, p. 353).

In light of this situation, it is important to recognize that the field of language policy encompasses various processes, including creation, interpretation,

implementation, and appropriation. These processes involve the active participation of multiple educational stakeholders. However, most research articles tend to focus almost exclusively on teachers, often positioning them as the primary agents in these processes. This narrow focus overlooks the critical roles played by other stakeholders, such as principals, coordinators, students, and parents, who also significantly influence language policy outcomes.

Furthermore, teachers are frequently perceived through an instrumental lens, merely as implementers of policies. This perspective fails to acknowledge that teachers typically engage with language policies only toward the end of the process, where their actions are contingent upon their interpretation of the existing policies. By neglecting the broader network of stakeholders involved, the literature diminishes the complex, collaborative nature of language policy implementation.

LANGUAGE POLICIES IN COLOMBIA

Following the examination of language policy trajectories around the world and the involvement of educational stakeholders in the implementation process, the next step is to expand the literature by incorporating findings from articles focused on Colombia, where I gained my professional experience. As is well known, Colombia has not been immune to global economic pressures and, over the years, has strived to stay at the forefront of language policy initiatives.

In this section, I provide a historical overview of language policies in Colombia and their impact on agents of change, particularly teachers. According to Usma (2009), with colonization, Castellano was imposed on the population, leading to the marginalization of indigenous languages and Creole. Initially, the primary objective of these policies was political, as the Spanish colonizers sought to communicate their rules and impose their culture and religion. Gómez (2016) notes that education at that time was exclusively for males, with Latin being used primarily for religious instruction and recitation.

After Colombia's independence, Gómez (2016) highlights that egalitarian education was promoted, resulting in the creation of multiple language policies that were, unfortunately, never fully implemented. For instance, in 1826, schools were mandated to teach Latin, Greek, English, French, Spanish, and a regional indigenous language; however, this initiative never came to fruition. The goals of language policies shifted from political to social, with a focus on the local context. Latin and Greek were prioritized due to the government's continued interest in religious objectives. Usma (2009) explains that the elite sent their children to Europe, which led to the introduction of English, French, and German into Colombian education, associating these languages with intellectualism, while indigenous languages were deemed inferior. After World War II, the significance of English and French grew, becoming central to Colombia's education system until 1993 through "improvised policies aligned with international political and economic agendas" (Usma, 2009, p. 125).

In 1982, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the British Council and Centro Colombo Americano, introduced The English Syllabus. However, as Usma (2009) notes, teachers lacked the oral proficiency necessary to implement a communicative approach effectively. The complexity of school environments and conflicting conditions among stakeholders undermined the success of this initiative. The early 1990s saw the development of the Colombian Framework for English (COFE) project, aimed at providing guidelines for pre-service teacher programs emphasizing reflective practice, research, and autonomy in language learning. However, limited resources, inadequate university structures, and weak administrative leadership hampered its implementation. Usma (2009) also points out that the 1991 Colombian Constitution reorganized the education system, setting specific goals for foreign language instruction. By 1994, the General Education Law granted schools autonomy in decision-making but required them to teach at least one foreign language starting in elementary school. In response, Colombia introduced Curricular Guidelines for Foreign Languages in 1999, aligning with the General Law's aims while contradicting the principle of teacher autonomy. Unfortunately, the education system was unprepared for this change, facing issues such as difficult working conditions, insufficient resources, a shortage of qualified teachers, and significant disparities between public and private schools.

Gómez (2016) observes that, despite years of English instruction in Colombia, there were no clear objectives or evaluation criteria until 2005, when Law 1651 was enacted to establish the National Bilingualism Program (NBP) 2004-2019. Usma (2009) and Gómez (2016) explain that NBP combines with the formulation of complementary regulations and different decrees where its objectives of providing indigenous communities with bilingual education, including flexible language teaching models for non-formal education called "education

to work and human development" (Law 1064) and improving communicative competence in English takes place. NBP adopted the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)- Decree 3870, the Saber 11 national exam, Saber Pro, and ECAES aligned to CEFR and productivity needs. Those exams assess students only in some reading skills, vocabulary, and grammar. In 2006, a booklet titled Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages English was distributed in public and private schools.

A second plan was introduced in 2010 under a new government (Gómez, 2016). This initiative, known as the Program for Strengthening the Development of Competences in Foreign Languages (2010-2014), emphasized enhancing teacher training, particularly in methodologies, cascade training models, and evaluation processes. The program also developed pedagogical materials tailored to specific student needs, created by Colombian specialists who provided methodological guidelines for educators. Follow-up and evaluation were conducted through various assessments specifically designed for teachers. As a result, "universities and school stakeholders were inundated with standardized models and tests" (Usma, 2009, p. 129).

Gómez (2016) reports that the third National Plan of English, titled *Colombia Very Well! 2015-2025*, continued efforts to enhance teacher training by increasing English instruction to at least three additional hours in secondary education and half an hour in primary education. This plan also aimed to equip schools with technology and align national exams, such as Saber 5th and 9th, with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Subsequently, the fourth initiative, *Bilingual Colombia 2014-2018*, reintroduced the concept of "bilingualism" with a focus on improving teachers' proficiency. This plan required teachers to reach at least a B1 level, with only those holding a B2 level or higher being eligible for public school positions. Additionally, native English speakers were brought in to teach grades 9 through 11. Universities were required to employ native English-speaking instructors, offer internships abroad, and ensure that students graduated with a B2 level to achieve accreditation. Furthermore, Bilingual Colombia published two key booklets: *Pedagogical Principles and Guidelines: Suggested English Curriculum, 6th to 11th Grades and Basic Learning Rights: English 6th to 11th Grades*, both centered on the communicative approach. For decades, Colombia has prioritized the English language in its educational policies, often attempting to implement these policies without adequately considering teachers' perspectives. Although teachers are directly responsible for the implementation process, they are frequently excluded from the decision-making stages. Their local knowledge is often dismissed as outdated, obsolete, or unreliable, leading to its neglect or outright disregard (Méndez et al., 2019; Gómez, 2016). Regarding the National Bilingualism Program (NBP), Gómez (2016) asserts that "few contributions from Colombian teachers, professors, and educational researchers have been taken into account when planning and evaluating the bilingualism plans" (Bonilla et al., 2016; Correa & Usma, 2013, p. 151). Teachers are thus relegated to the role of technicians or clerks, merely following predetermined rules and standards. This marginalization devalues their expertise, rendering them invisible in the policy-making process (Guerrero, 2010). In a similar vein, Méndez (2019) observes that "English teachers' reactions to this treatment led them to realize that the NBP rules positioned them as mere technicians, whose mission was to uncritically comply with the program without altering its conditions" (p. 70).

Usma (2009), Gómez (2016), and Le Gal (2018) concur that the concept of "bilingualism" has been widely misunderstood in Colombia, where it is predominantly equated with English, leading to a narrow interpretation of its true meaning. This limited perspective results in the marginalization and silencing of indigenous and Creole languages. Such misconceptions stem from the adoption of European discourses on bilingualism, where language policies are imported, adapted, and at times resisted locally (Usma, 2009). The implementation of foreign models and assessments, such as the CEFR, ICELT (teaching model), TOEFL, TKT, QPT, MELICET, and MET, has proven largely ineffective in the Colombian context due to their lack of contextual relevance. These models fail to account for factors like limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, diverse student populations, insufficient instructional time, teacher qualifications, and barriers to international mobility (Gómez, 2016).

Teachers in Colombia face significant challenges, including "juvenile crime, gang activity, members of guerrilla and paramilitary groups, drug trafficking, young parents, displaced children, and students with mental health issues, among others living in similar conditions" (Guerrero & Quintero, 2016, p. 55, translated by the author). Usma (2009) argues that by prioritizing foreign methodologies, bilingualism has been transformed into a profitable business, where costly materials, training, and certifications contribute to processes of internalization,

instrumentalization, marketization, standardization, and language stratification, ultimately leading to systematic exclusion.

Although each subsequent plan has been more realistic in its approach, "the constant changes have undermined the continuity, consistency, and coherence of strategies, leading to a slower work pace and fostering a sense of low achievement and frustration" (Gómez, 2016, p. 148). Despite these challenges, teachers often find ways to adapt and respond positively to language policies. They act as active and creative agents, capable of negotiating external pressures and implementing policies in innovative ways (Cruz, 2018).

In the Colombian rural sector, quality education and healthcare systems have been neglected, resulting in economic marginalization, deprivation, lack of support, insufficient resources, and a lack of recognition. This suggests that policymakers are largely disconnected from the realities of rural contexts. According to Cruz (2018), "Colombian educational policies do not seek in any way to benefit teachers and students but rather to advance economic agendas, improve the country's competitiveness, and enhance its position in the global market" (p. 14, translated by the author).

The literature review reveals that while most research studies describe the evolution of language policies in different countries, they also identify teachers as the primary agents responsible for translating governmental rules and regulations into practice. Ricento and Hornberger (1996) note that "the teacher is an unwitting reproducer of social reality; several researchers have described how teachers can transform classrooms, thereby promoting institutional change that can lead to political and, ultimately, broader social change" (p. 418). This is why they position teachers at the "center of the onion" model (Hornberger, 2007, p. 148). Interestingly, studies from various countries consistently highlight that "teachers are not included in the process of planning those language policies, even though, in the end, they are the ones tasked with implementing them" (Shohamy, 2009, p. 55).

It is crucial to emphasize that all stakeholders play essential roles and have distinct functions that contribute to the effective implementation of language policies. Among the meso-level agents are administrative officers, principals, and coordinators; however, there is limited research detailing their specific roles in the implementation process. These stakeholders are responsible for managing economic, social, and educational resources, as well as facilitating communication to optimize the execution of language policies. In the context of Colombia, Bermúdez (2014) highlights:

> "It is vitally important to recognize that part of the success of the implementation of the National Bilingualism Program depends not only on the decisions and actions of the District Education Secretary and the principals but also on the effort, interest, support, and work of all members of the educational community to understand, assume, and commit to the reasons and purposes that justify the implementation of pilot projects for bilingualism or the intensification of English" (p. 158, translated by the author).

Unfortunately, this recommendation is challenging to implement, as these agents often lack confidence in the projects, viewing them as temporary initiatives. At times, they may also lack the necessary knowledge to effectively implement the policies or may prioritize their own interests (Bermúdez et al., 2014). Additionally, there is a notable lack of information on students, who are the ultimate focus of these policies. In fact, students are critical agents who respond to the decisions, interpretations, and processes involved in language policy implementation. The continuity of these policies shapes students' attitudes toward their native and foreign languages, influencing their perspectives, thought processes, and ideologies. As Montoya (2013) highlights, "policies and institutional planning ultimately influence the attitudes that students express towards languages" (Ndlangamandla, 2010, p. 244, translated by the author).

It is also essential to understand how parents' involvement influences the implementation of language policies, as their attitudes and ideologies can significantly impact students' ability to meet the objectives of the teaching-learning process. Unfortunately, there is limited information on the role of parents in language policy, and it is possible that their participation has been relatively minimal or even non-existent. While their involvement is recognized as important in the educational process, there remains a lack of clarity on how they can effectively contribute (Flaborea et al., 2013).

After examining language policies in various countries, including Colombia, several critical questions arise: What is the role of the agents responsible for implementing

these policies? To what extent do they participate in the process? What impact does their involvement have on achieving policy objectives? How do communication and collaboration occur among the different educational stakeholders to ensure the success of language policies? The literature predominantly focuses on the evolution of language policies in different contexts, often aligned with government objectives. However, most studies tend to overlook the role of educational stakeholders beyond teachers, as if they were the sole agents accountable for policy implementation. Given these challenges, it is crucial to investigate the dynamics among multiple stakeholders and to clarify the specific roles and contributions of each agent in the implementation process of language policies.

CONCLUSIONS

This literature review reveals that most reports on language policies focus predominantly on the laws and regulations proposed by governments, rather than on the agents responsible for creating, interpreting, and implementing these policies. Most research highlights how the objectives of language policies have historically been driven by religious, social, political, or economic interests, and how these priorities have shifted over time in different countries. In the current global context, economic interests primarily dictate language policy and planning, as evidenced by the widespread adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in numerous countries.

The reports suggest that the adoption of the CEFR is often motivated by the desire to improve living conditions, secure better employment opportunities, and facilitate academic or professional mobility, despite diverse traditions, cultures, and local realities.

A recurring theme in the literature is that teachers are considered the most critical agents in the implementation of language policies, as they bring these policies to life in educational settings. However, teachers' voices remain largely unheard. In many countries, their expertise and contextual knowledge are undervalued, with teachers often reduced to the role of mere technicians or clerks. This exclusion from the policy-making process is paradoxical, as teachers possess a deep understanding of students' actual contexts and are therefore best positioned to inform effective policy design.

Additionally, there often appears to be a lack of communication among the various educational agents involved in language planning and policy. Similarly, there is limited information regarding the experiences of other stakeholders, such as students and parents at the micro-level, as well as coordinators, principals, and administrative officers at the meso-level. It is crucial to examine the impact of language policies on these diverse stakeholders across all levels, as teachers are not the only participants in the planning process. Each stakeholder plays a significant role, and recognizing their contributions is essential for fostering effective collaboration among educational agents. By promoting more heterarchical relationships, we can enhance the outcomes of language policy decisions and ensure a more cohesive implementation process.

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