

**Special issue on
Language education policies**

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Editorial:

Multiple localities and the energizing English in language education policies

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In a world characterized by ever increasing migration and global co-operation (both virtual and physical), language and language education are highly political issues. Current language education policy apparently takes place in a crossroads of various (horizontal) policy sectors (cultural, social, economic etc), as well as (vertical) layers of macro and micro, thus calling for a holistic analysis. With these issues in mind, the 28th International Summer School and conference of applied language studies at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland was organised under the theme *Who Needs Languages? Micro and macro perspectives into language education policies*.

It is somehow natural and even tempting to approach language education policy with dichotomies such as *macro-micro* or *global-local*. As Hult (2010) points out, following Blommaert (2007), these dichotomies make the different levels of policy visible. To continue along these lines, the benefit of the macro-micro distinction is, in other words, that it has made specifically the micro aspects of policy visible. For instance, Blommaert (2010) and Pennycook (2010) discuss the phenomena of globalization and superdiversity against local language purposes, thus localising supranational concepts and constructs. Pennycook (2010) takes the idea of locality further and claims that all language practices are, in fact, local. A paradigm shift, a “micro turn”, is taking place, as was evidenced by the conference presentations. The conceptualisation of “micro” is no longer a disturbance in the flow of rational(istic) policy implementation, but an indication of the multisitedness of policymaking.

The theme brought to the conference several presentations that dealt with either the macro or the micro aspects of language education policy. However, many presenters were also struggling with the complex, messy and emerging issues of multi-sitedness of policy making that cannot be reduced to dichotomies.

The conference plenarists were invited with the micro-macro dichotomy in mind, but they also ended upon challenging that dichotomy. *Clara Keating* discussed the importance of historical trajectories of the individual language education policy actors, mirroring the situational realizations of micro actors into meso and macro policies. *Waldemar Martyniuk*, in turn, represented the European macro level view in discussing transnational (especially European) language education policies. He drew the connection between the old understanding of language learning as “foreign language learning” and the modern view of language competences. *Joseph Lo Bianco* linked different policy levels together in a holistic presentation, with the additional aim of providing the audience with policy arguments for language education policy debates. Lo Bianco in fact concluded that, in the future, language education policy will be more public and include more varied combination of actors. In a question from the audience, this approach was promptly dubbed as *open source language*

education planning, illustrating also the diverse sites of policymaking.

In addition to the plenary and paper sessions, the programme included seven invited workshops, giving the participants a possibility to cross the boundaries between research and practice (yet another simplifying dichotomy!) in macro and micro situations.

The thematic issue at hand includes five articles developed from conference presentations. These articles are characterized either by their relationship to the multiple localities of policy or the position of English in language education policy. While the conference theme was in no way geared towards the position of English in the field of language policy, four out of five articles in this issue explicitly deal with it. In other words, English seems to energize a lot of the language policy discussion, even though the research is not directly about English.

The articles in this issue

What counts as bilingualism? Who sets the policies? Where are these policies adopted from? These questions are relevant while reading *Anne-Marie de Mejía's* article *The national bilingual programme in Colombia: Imposition or Opportunity?* It is an analysis of the debate, especially researchers' perspectives, around the National Bilingual Programme, created by the Colombian Ministry of Education, and its reliance on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). At surface, the national policy seems very positive: it gives all the students in the country an opportunity to become bilingual in English and Spanish. As the analysis of the debate shows, the proficiency in English is privileged (for the sake of the country's competitiveness in the global market), excludes other types of bilingualism, and does not do justice to the multilingualism in Colombia. The author concludes the article by stating that there is a need for a more inclusive and equitable policy.

Muiris Ó Laoire, Clare Rigg and Vasiliki Georgiou discuss the notion of subaltern agency in education in their article *Subaltern Agency and Language Education Policy: Implementing a language policy on the ground*. For them, the subaltern voice – which has traditionally been understood as marginal, and outside the hegemonic structures of power – denotes the actors who become crucial in shaping policy; not as resisting macro policies, but acting in accordance with the space and locality where they interact. According to the authors, recent language policy research highlights individual and collective agency in the processes of language use, attitudes and policies. Consequently, language policies are not merely implemented, but are actually shaped “on the ground”.

Sabine Ylönen and Mari Kivelä analyse multilingual practices in Finnish universities and mirror their extensive survey data against the position of English in the academic world. Their analysis of *The Role of Languages at Finnish Universities* shows that while English is used overwhelmingly, there exists an unused multilingual potential in the Finnish academic community. Their article also touches upon an apparent paradox of internationalization: increasing internationalization seems to lead towards decreased multilingualism, at least in official contexts. What Ylönen and Kivelä's article shows is that the local

practices of language use could be more versatile, if the existing language potential were activated. Ylönen and Kivelä conclude by suggesting several measures to promote multilingualism by linking languages to policy technologies (Ball 2003) such as salary and recruiting practices and other means of recognition; in other words, to practices of power.

The thread of English is continued in Ursula Lanvers' article *Language Education Policy in England: Is English the elephant in the room?*, where she discusses the implicit notion of "English is enough" in British language education policy. She contrasts the apparent rhetoric with reality by presenting, on the one hand, what she calls "tokenisms" of language education policy, such as different policy actions promoting language learning, and on the other, the realities of the anglocentric policies of assuming that English really is enough. For her, the impetus of change does not follow from (macro level) policy initiatives, but (micro level) open discussions, which give voice to those pointing out the fallacies of the current policy.

Voices of English are also present in Sabine Fiedler's article *English as a lingua franca – a native-culture-free code?* The author discusses the impact of culture and identity when English is used as a lingua franca (ELF). The special focus is acceptability and consequences of the dichotomy between language of identification and language of communication. This topic is approached from the point of view of phraseology. Drawing on her data, the author argues that English as a lingua franca can be a language of identification, not just a mere instrument of communication. The ingredients of the identities represented in the data are multiple: the speakers of English as a lingua franca can draw on their own languages and cultures, English native languages and cultures as well as specific features of ELF cultures.

From dichotomies to a multi-sited view of policy

Imagine a game of football: One ball, ten plus ten players and, of course, the goalies. Now imagine a game of football where – instead of one ball – there are several balls on the field at the same time. Each ball makes visible a certain situation with a particular compilation of players focusing on just that ball, instead of the others. At times, some balls possess a tactical position that creates more pull towards them than the others – they might be closer to a goal, or for some reason – the movement of the players has sucked their focus towards the same target.

The game of language education policy is played much like the latter version of the game, with several balls rather than just one. One-dimensional top-down view of policy is easy to conceptualise, but with several balls in the game, you need a multi-sited and multidimensional research approach. For instance, instead of looking at the policy outcomes, focus on processes of language education policies would make us more aware of the different policy triggers – and probably make the game more interesting. This is exemplified by the focus on English in many of the articles in this issue. They all take their individual looks into English, and while "English is always wrong" (as quipped by English as Lingua Franca researcher Anna Mauranen, as she referred to the controversial position of English as a global language), it does do something right: English is a great energizer of language education policy. While it in some

views suffocates the field, or is “not enough for multilingualism”, it simultaneously activates language education policy debates, bringing to the surface often simplified, but complicated issues of hegemonical multilingualism.

By turning our attention towards the distinctions of monolingualism vs. multilingualism (yet another simplifying dichotomy – the field is, indeed, full of them), it forces us to examine our understanding of the hegemony itself (see de Mejía in this issue). It seems that multilingualism (as a topic for language education policy research) is still a complicated and vague concept, creating different understandings of our empirical realities. What if we stopped talking about (individual) languages (cf. Heller’s discussion of a set of parallel monolingualisms, 1999); what would the debate on multilingualism look like?

Many of the articles in this thematic issue aim at rethinking the often-typical distinction between macro and micro, global and local. However, by using terms like *macro-micro* or *global-local*, we not only dichotomize the phenomena to make them easier to understand and show the relationships or gaps between the opposing poles. We also use these concepts as mechanisms of governing (Foucault 1991) language education policies. These dichotomies become technologies of power (Rose 1999; Ball 2003), controlling institutions and knowledge production. Shore and Wright (1997:3) discuss a similar phenomenon under the term *mobilizing metaphors*, which move to discourses, create norms and make certain discourses more powerful and offer particular ways of solving problems, while diminishing other ways of handling them. In order to start a change, we should at the very least make this multi-sitedness visible by beginning to talk about language education policies in plural. This includes looking for solutions on language education policy problems from outside the traditional realm of language education policy.

Politics are dichotomical and simplified – that is their basic nature. Research on these policies, on the other hand, should not fall into the same trap. Multi-sitedness is difficult and complicated, and makes simplifying dichotomies tempting -- but it also makes language education policies more interesting. Reality is messy and we have to deal with it!

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