



Language policy as public policy

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Abstract

This chapter presents and discusses the public policy approach to Language Policy and Planning (LPP). It presents to an audience of applied linguists, sociolinguists, and decision makers key concepts in public policy studies, such as policy cycle, programme theory, policy instruments, and evaluation. It describes how they can be applied to LPP. This chapter can also be useful for students in public policy, public administration, and political science as well as economics and political philosophy who are interested in approaching studies in language policy from this specific perspective. It contributes to restoring the theoretical and epistemological links between LPP research and public policy studies that have gradually weakened after the “critical turn” in LPP.

Resumo

Ĉi tiu ĉapitro prezentas kaj diskutas la publikpolitikan aliron al Lingva Politiko kaj Planado (LPP). Ĝi prezentas al publiko de aplikataj lingvistoj, sociolingvistoj kaj decidantoj ŝlosilajn konceptojn en publikpolitikaj studoj, kiel politika ciklo, programteorio, politikaj instrumentoj kaj taksado. Ĝi priskribas kiel ili povas esti aplikitaj al LPP. Ĉi tiu ĉapitro ankaŭ povas esti utila por studentoj pri publika politiko, publika administrado kaj politika scienco kaj ankaŭ pri ekonomio kaj politika filozofio, kiuj interesiĝas al studoj pri lingvo-politiko el tiu ĉi specifa perspektivo. Ĝi kontribuas al restarigo de la teoriaj kaj epistemologiaj ligoj inter LPP-esplorado kaj publikpolitikaj studoj kiuj iom post iom malfortiĝis post la «kritika turno» en LPP.

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1. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the public policy approach to language policy and planning (LPP). It reviews some central concepts in public policy studies, such as policy cycle, programme theory, policy instruments, and evaluation, and it explains how they can be applied to LPP. Although this contribution has been written primarily for an audience of applied linguists, sociolinguists, and decision makers, it can also be useful for students in public policy and administration, and political science, economics and political philosophy who are interested in approaching LPP from this specific perspective.

This contribution starts from the observation that language policy can be studied like other well-established forms of public policy/social policy in areas such as the environment, income support, transportation, education, or healthcare. From this perspective, language policy can be defined as a public policy aimed at addressing a social, economic, political, or organisational issue related to the management of linguistic diversity in a given territory. Language policy, therefore, is a response by the government to an issue politically defined as collective in nature involving language or languages. While language policy obviously deals with language(s), it is “ultimately oriented towards non-linguistic ends” (Cooper 1989: 35). For example, the target of language policies protecting and promoting minority languages is not only language as such, but also (and more importantly) the community of speakers and the protection and promotion of their political and cultural rights to use the language in social life. Interventions on behalf of the minority language –e.g., orthographic reform, the written standardisation of an oral code, or the production of a new official vocabulary – is not an end in itself, but rather it is functional and propaedeutic to creating the conditions for its greater use in society (see Gobbo, this volume).

This chapter contributes to restoring the theoretical and epistemological links between LPP research and public policy studies, which have gradually weakened after the ‘critical turn’ in LPP (see the introduction to this volume). Although the importance of the public policy approach in LPP was already clear from the origins of the discipline, still too little attention has been paid to the operational and organisational aspects of LPP, including “the development, implementation, and evaluation of specific language policies” (Ricento 2006: 18).¹ As Leigh Oakes observes,

the critical and ethnographic turns have undeniably allowed LPP to make important theoretical and methodological advances over the last six decades. Nonetheless, as LPP has matured as a field of academic inquiry with its own intellectual objectives and specialised vocabulary, it has arguably also drifted further away from the concerns of policymakers and public policy practitioners needing to make and justify choices about language. In order to help realise the transformative aspirations expressed especially by critical approaches to LPP, the field would do well to find ways to reconnect with these groups, to decrease, not increase, the gap between research and practice already noted in the pioneer years. The way forward lies perhaps not in a new *turn* so much as a *return*; or more specifically, a rediscovery of the field’s more pragmatic and outward-looking origins (Oakes 2022, forthcoming).

¹ The inadequate relationship between language planning and other social sciences has been stressed by several authors (see Tollefson 2008: 9 for a review).

As already explained in the introduction of this book, language policy affects the structure (or corpus), the functions (or status), and the acquisition of a language. This chapter focuses on the last two aspects of language planning (see Gobbo, this volume for corpus planning), and it is organised as follows: Section 2 clarifies the epistemological and theoretical implications of studying language policy as a public policy. Section 3 presents the fundamental framework used in public policy studies to study public policies, that is, the policy cycle model, and it explains the extent to which the different disciplines involved in LPP can contribute to the understanding of each stage of the cycle. Section 4 completes the discussion by examining the relationships between the public policy approach to LPP and the study language policy at the meso level, as well as of other types of public policy. The last section concludes.

2 Public Policy and Language Practices

In Rubin and Jernudd's 'classic' definition of language planning, language policy is defined as an attempt to solve a 'language problem':

language planning is focused on problem-solving and is characterised by the formulation and evaluation of alternatives for language problems to find the best (or optimal, most efficient) decision. In all cases it is future-oriented; that is, the outcomes of policies and strategies must be specified in advance of action taken (1971b: xvi, quoted in Jernudd and Nekvapil 2012: 16).

Rubin and Jernudd's definition is consistent with modern definitions of public policy. For example Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone, and Hill's define a public policy as "a series of intentionally coherent decisions or activities taken or carried out by different public—and sometimes private actors—, whose resources, institutional links and interests vary, with a view to resolving in a targeted manner a problem that is politically defined as collective in nature" (2007: 24). The term 'problem' in Rubin and Jernudd's definition must be interpreted as 'issue' or 'question'. There is nothing intrinsically negative in linguistic diversity, but only social, political or economic issues associated with its management.² There are, of course, many definitions of public policy in the literature, and it would be tedious to report them here. Instead, it is more interesting to concentrate on some common elements of the various definitions of public policy (see Howlett *et al.* 2020: 1-19). Firstly, the primary agent of public policy is the *government*, at different institutional levels, since it has the ability and the legitimacy to make authoritative collective decisions on behalf of citizens. This of course does not exclude private actors from playing a role in the policy process (see Section 4). It is important to recall that the term 'government', in its broadest sense, refers to the institutional processes through which collective (and usually binding) decisions are made, and it is not necessarily restricted to 'the government of the day' in the sense of 'the executive' (Heywood 2019). Decisions made by local authorities, e.g., in the field of education, are also a relevant object of public policy studies. Secondly, policy making is about making choices to do something or nothing to address a public problem/issue. If abstaining from doing something is a deliberate decision, then also 'doing nothing' is a public policy. Thirdly, the content of a policy is made of a selection of *goals* and of *means* to achieve them. Public policy, therefore, is *goal-oriented*. Finally, decisions are always made under constraints, and these constraints can be either technical (e.g., feasibility, state of knowledge) or political (e.g., norms,

² This does not mean that linguistic diversity has not been or cannot be interpreted this way. For example, linguistic diversity has been interpreted as something inherently problematic and impractical in the early stages of the decolonisation process (see introduction, this volume).

values and ideas). The level of constraints determines the capacity of government to implement policies.

While in classic LPP, as shown in the introduction to this book, language policy is clearly viewed as a type of public policy designed and implemented directly or indirectly by government, contemporary definitions of language policy encompass virtually any actor in society who, at any level, tries to influence the linguistic behaviour of other people. This is a first divergence between contemporary LPP research and classic LPP. Kaplan and Baldauf, for example, argue that the term language planning encompasses “everything from government macro-level national planning to group or individual micro-level planning” (1997: 27), including “unplanned” forms of language planning (Baldauf 1994). According to Beacco “la politique linguistique peut être menée pas des citoyens ou des groups, par des partis politiques et dans un cadre associative ou privé” (Beacco 2016: 22).

A second fundamental divergence between classic LPP and later approaches regards the distinction between policy and practices. In his influential model, Spolsky (2012), argues that language policy is made up of three main components. The first is ‘language practices’ of the members of the speech community, that is, the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire (i.e., words, sounds, grammatical choices, as well as choices of registers). The second element is ‘beliefs’ about language and language use, that is, ideas about what appropriate language practices are. In other words, language beliefs are “language policy with the manager left out, what people think should be done” (Spolsky 2004: 14), while language practices are what people actually do. The third component of language policy in Spolsky’s definition is ‘language management’, that is, the efforts by *some* members of a speech community who have or believe to have authority over the other members to modify their linguistic practices. Anyone can be a language manager, from legislative assemblies writing a national constitution down to a family member trying to persuade others in the family to speak a heritage language (Spolsky 2004: 8). In a recently revised version of his theory, Spolsky (2019) introduces two components to the definition of language policy. The first one is ‘language advocates’. Language advocates are individuals or groups who wish to alter other people’s practices without having the authority of language managers. Finally, he incorporates ‘self-management’ in the model, that is, “attempts of speakers to modify their own linguistic proficiency and repertoire” (2019: 326). Spolsky’s over-extended definition of language policy and its actors is consistent with Kaplan and Baldauf’s approach presented above. In recent years, the term language policy has been used to describe individuals’ choices as to which languages to use to communicate within the family (i.e., ‘family language policy’), in particular with children (see Caldas 2012; King and Fogle 2017 for an overview).

The consequences of this gradual broadening of the definition of language policy, however, are not negligible. The semantic space of the term ‘language policy’ has been stretched to such an extent to embrace virtually anything people decide to do with languages, and therefore it has become so vague as to decrease in usefulness, because it does not allow to clearly differentiate between ‘policy’ proper and ‘practices’, and between the roles and decisions of different actors in the policy process. It is well-known that the term ‘policy’ in English (but not necessarily in other languages) has indeed a broad meaning, that is, “a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions” (Webster dictionary). In an organisational context, for example, ‘policy’ indicates the decisions and the guiding principles

of the organisation about a certain question. One can refer to the ‘baggage policy’ of an airline to refer to the decisions about the size and the weight of passengers’ baggage, or the ‘smoking policy’ of a train company, or the ‘privacy policy’ of a website. In this sense, it is roughly equivalent to ‘rules’ or ‘regulations’. This breadth of meaning, however, does not help in defining the boundaries of LPP with respect to other disciplines, in particular sociolinguistics. What are the differences and the boundaries between LPP and sociolinguistics if policies and practices are conflated? As Johnson (2013:23) correctly asks, what is not language policy, then?

In the public policy approach to LPP these differences are clearer. Individuals do not make ‘policies’; they take decisions which result in *practices*, and these practices are the object of study of sociolinguistics and the sociology of language.³ By contrast, a government’s decisions involving languages result in *policies*, and these are precisely the object of study of a public policy approach to LPP. For example, a man who decides to reduce his consumption of cigarettes from 20 per day to just one because activists of an association for the prevention of lung cancer convinced him to do so is not changing his ‘smoking policy’; he is just changing his habits and trying to quit smoking. From a public policy perspective the term ‘family language policy’ means a public policy carried out by the government to explicitly influence families’ language decisions (e.g., organising language courses to preserve heritage languages and promote their use at home), while in current LPP research this term is generally defined as “explicit and overt planning in relation to language use within the home and among family members” (King and Fogle 2017). From a public policy approach, however, decisions of a father and a mother as to what languages to use or not with their children at home, no matter what the government thinks about these choices, are viewed as practices, actual individuals’ behaviour. Such individuals’ practices are simply the result of conscious decisions at the individual level (as opposed to a purely impulsive reactions, e.g., dictated by immediate danger or fear) that people able to reason routinely do in their lives. They are not comparable with an institutionalised political process that typically produce documents or guidelines and involves the action of government. By the same token, if some family members try to convince the other members of the family to recycle more and better differentiate waste disposal, they are just making private decisions resulting in a certain conduct. Labelling this as an ‘environmental family policy’ does not change the fact that we are dealing with the study of actual individuals’ decisions and practices.

Influencing people’s behaviour is usually the *target* or the outcome of public policy, but it is not part of public policy itself. Clearly, there are strong relationships between LPP in the public policy approach and sociolinguistics (see Section 3). A sound understanding of individuals’ practices is crucial to plan policy, and the outcomes of a public policy are evaluated precisely in terms of their capacity to affect the evolution of individuals’ practices and representations. But the two things are epistemologically and theoretically different.

Spolsky’s model, therefore, is certainly useful to study the ecology of language in a community, and to characterise the role of various agents in influencing language change, but it does not provide a suitable theoretical framework to examine public policies targeting languages. Studying LPP from the public policy approach means focusing on the action of government, to identify and explain the different phases of policy-making and how these phases are related to each other. It also means

³ For traditional approaches to sociolinguistics, I refer to Ammon, Dittmar, Mattheier, and Trudgill (2004), and Bayley, Cameron, and Lucas (2013). Poststructural approaches to the study of ‘language and society’ are presented in García, Flores, and Spotti (2017).

examining how different types of actors influence the process that leads to government decisions, and what the impact is of non-discursive factors (e.g., the strength of the administrative apparatus of the state) on the policy process. Moreover, it requires an understanding of what the determinants of a good policy design are, and this involves the study of the different policy instruments designed or developed in order to implement those policies, (e.g., taxes, information campaign, financial incentives, and regulations), as well as the indicators used in monitoring language policy implementation. Finally, it requires empirical study of the effects of policy on the evolution of people's linguistic practices and representations. This framework is better provided by the 'policy cycle' briefly presented in the next section. A fully-fledged and a more in-depth application of the policy cycle model to the study of LPP is contained in the various chapters of the *Routledge Handbook of Language Policy and Planning* (Gazzola, Grin, Cardinal, and Heugh 2022, forthcoming), to which the reader can refer.

3 The Policy Cycle Framework

Planning is seen as a decision-making activity for applied problem-solving. It is generally structured in several phases: problem recognition, proposal of solution (which includes the ex-ante assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of alternative solutions), choice of solution, putting solution into effect, and monitoring results. This model was adopted by the pioneers of LPP, particularly in the field of corpus planning (see Jernudd and Das Gupta 1971; Rubin 1971).⁴ Recall that in classic LPP the term language planning was defined as a planned action of authorities to solve 'language problems'. This model mostly disappeared from mainstream LPP research because of the 'critical turn' (see the introduction to this book), thereby entailing a gradual decoupling of LPP from public policy studies, and a subsequent neglect of the massive literature in this field.

The policy cycle model is derived from the operationalisation of the applied problem-solving model to public action. Although it has been subject to various criticisms in public policy studies (see the review in Jann and Wegrich 2007), it is still the standard heuristic model employed to characterise and examine the different steps of the policy process, as well as the relationships between them. The policy cycle model presents policies as sequential parts or stages that correspond to applied problem-solving. These steps are (1) problem emergence, (2) agenda setting, (3) consideration of policy options, (4) decision-making, (5) implementation, and (6) evaluation. Evaluation provides feedback on what has been done and the results obtained. Evaluation can lead to the successful conclusion of a policy if the problem has been solved, to a redefinition of the public policy itself or to its eventual abandonment. In short, evaluation can be the end point of a programme and at the same time a new starting point.

There are some differences in the literature about the exact definition of each phase. Some contributions merge steps 3 and 4 into one single phase called 'policy formulation and adoption' (Mintrom and Williams 2013; Knoepfel *et al* 2015), and this is the choice made in this chapter too. In other contributions, the first phase is not included in the policy cycle because it is

⁴ For example, see various chapters in the section "A General Approach to Language Planning" in the book edited by Rubin and Jernudd (1971a). The oldest academic journal of LPP, "The World Language Problem". (*La Monda Lingva Problemo*, in its original Esperanto version) was founded in 1969 and renamed 'Language Problems & Language Planning' in 1977.

preliminary to public policy process proper (Howlett *et al.* 2020). This gives the circular flow chart shown in Figure 1 that will be named the ‘language policy cycle’.

Figure 1: The language policy cycle

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE (see end of this paper)

In order to avoid misplaced criticisms, it is important to clarify how this model can be used in LPP research and in practical language planning. The model has two main functions. First, it can be used by researchers to describe and interpret the language policy process, because it offers a systematic view of the different stages in the process leading from public and political debate to the design, implementation, and evaluation of language policy. The policy cycle framework “facilitates an understanding of a multidimensional process by disaggregating the complexity of the process into any number of stages and sub-stages, each of which can be investigated alone or in terms of its relationship to any or all the other stages of the cycle” (Howlett *et al.* 2020: 12). In addition, it is versatile, because it can be used at different levels of policy making, from the local to the international, and it facilitates comparative analyses. Finally, it is inclusive, in the sense that it permits the examination of the intertwined role of different actors, ideas, and organisations involved in language policy formulation, and not just governmental units formally charged with the task.

It is important to emphasise that the model does not have the ambition to precisely reflect actual policy making. Policymakers do not always address and solve public problems in this systematic and linear way; they can skip some steps. For example, some decisions are never implemented and some choices may be made before the debate or the agenda-setting phase. What is presented in the policy cycle, therefore, is an abstract and ideal version of the policy process. The model does not prescribe that all phases should and will be followed, but simply that the policy process typically involves different stages, and that these stages can be studied on their own or in relation with other stages. In sum, the model is useful to organise knowledge about the policy process, its actors, and outcomes.

The second function of the model is to assist policy makers in actual language planning, by clarifying the phases and the challenges of the policy process. In this perspective, the model can be used as a practical guide, in particular in the stages of policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Recent examples of application of this framework include UNESCO’s “Global action plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032” (UNESCO 2021), and the “General Language Policy Plan for the Friulian Language 2021-2025” of the Autonomous Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy (ARLeF 2021).

3.1 Emergence of a language issue

The emergence and awareness of a language problem in society (in the sense of ‘issue’, as clarified above) is the preliminary stage of the cycle. This phase refers to the public debate about languages in society in the broad sense of the term. The public debate can encompass different public and private actors including the media, associations, employers, activists, and individual influencers. The public debate can concern a question that is perceived by someone as problematic. For example, speakers of a minority language feel discriminated and ask for public support to their language; the export

industry complains about the lack of good skills in foreign languages; families in a region ask for more opportunities for pupils to learn second languages in schools; or human rights activists raise the issue of the social and linguistic integration of adult migrants.

This phase is preliminary to the public policy proper because political and institutional actors have not yet taken a clear position on the issue in question. However, it is important to study if, how and why a certain issue becomes the subject of public debate, in order to understand the origins and the context of language policies. In liberal democratic societies, in particular, if an important linguistic issue emerges in society, it is likely that sooner or later some politicians will take an interest in it and try to translate it into votes by promising to deal with it. In authoritarian countries, however, the public debate may be absent or heavily constrained.

In LPP research, the study of this phase benefits from the inputs of various disciplines, including sociolinguistics, politics, law, history, economics, educational study and philosophy. A broad perspective is indeed required to understand why and how a language question becomes a public issue.

3.2 Agenda-setting

Agenda-setting is the first stage of public policy proper. It refers to the process by which public problems come to the attention of governments. A *public* problem cannot be defined as such if it is not part of a political agenda. During this phase, the government, political parties, and public organisations debate and propose solutions to the language issue raised. This is a crucial phase of a language policy. In the public policy approach, as shown in Section 2, a language policy is such only if it involves the government (in the broad sense of the term, i.e., not only the central government, but also regional and local governments and public bodies).

The agenda-setting phase is eminently political. The implication of this for LPP research is that studying agenda-setting means examining how and why a language policy question has been framed in a certain way, and why it has been placed on the agenda of the questions that deserve government's attention. Whose interests have been manifested, overtly and covertly? What concepts and notions have been used, possibly coined in that debate? Here, the study of discourse and ideology is indispensable to understand the issues at stake. Political science, political theory, media studies, and social psychology can provide central contributions to understanding this stage of LPP, as well as its relationships with the previous step. Research methods such as discourse analysis (Wodak 2006) and Q-sorting (Lo Bianco 2015) are very useful in the study of agenda setting (on research methods in LPP, see Hult and Johnson 2015).

3.3 Policy design and adoption

Policy design and adoption is the actual core of language policy. In this stage, policy makers clarify the goals and means of a policy, how specific measures will deliver certain effects, for whom, under what conditions, at what material and symbolic costs, and delivering what kind of benefits. Policy design usually implies the elaboration of alternatives (including the status quo) to address the public issues at hand, and this is followed by choice of one of them (including doing nothing). The selection of the preferred course of action is simultaneously influenced by various contextual factors, including the degree of urgency, and the type of complexity of the issues that policy is expected to address. Actors involved in policy design and adoption are typically senior civil servants, senior advisors and, of course, elected politicians who must make the final decisions.

From the point of view of LPP research, this phase benefits from input from any relevant discipline in the social sciences and humanities that can help to critically examine existing policy plans or to assist decision makers in the formulation of alternatives (the list includes applied linguistics, law, sociolinguistics, educational sciences, economics, public administration and political sociology).

Policy design would require an entire chapter on its own. In this section, I will briefly recall its most important elements, that is, the development of a programme theory, the selection of language policy instruments, and the design of a system of indicators.

The programme theory. The programme theory of a public policy (or programme) is defined as

the conception of what must be done to bring about in intended changes. As such it is the foundation on which every program rests [...] Whether it is expressed in a detailed program plan and rationale or is only implicit in the program structure and activities, the program theory explains why the program does what it does and provides the rationale for expecting that doing so will achieve the desired outcome (Rossi *et al.* 2019: 59-60).

The programme theory is known under different names, e.g., ‘theory of change’ or ‘logic models’. It is a theory about change because it spells out the expected cause-effect relationships between the policy input and its outcomes, that is, how means relate to goals. As noted in Section 2, the content of a policy is made of a selection of *goals* and of *means* to achieve them. Recall that *inputs* are all means mobilised for the implementation of a policy, e.g., financial, human, and material resources. An *output* is the direct product of a policy, that is, what is funded and achieved (or realised) through the resources allocated to the policy. *Outcomes* or results are the final effects of a policy on the directly concerned actors. For example, the output of a policy aimed at promoting the usage of a minority language through the media is the number of hours of television programming in the minority language, or the number of printed copies of a magazine. The outcome is measured in terms of speakers, i.e., in terms of actual viewers of the TV programme and readers of the magazine. When the policy outcomes achieved correspond to the policy objectives, the policy is effective.

The programme theory should not be understood as a rigid, deterministic, top-down plan that the decision-maker drops on the sociolinguistic reality from above, as sometimes has been mistakenly argued. Rather, the programme theory is a working tool to prevent language policy from becoming a disconnected list of individual measures with undefined effects. Preparing a programme theory is not a mechanical exercise, its development interacts with political imperatives from governments and political parties.

Assessing the programme theory of a language policy entails explaining how inputs are logically (or at least plausibly) connected with outputs and with outcomes, that is, how the language policy measures are expected to influence the evolution of the practices and attitudes of the beneficiary actors. A programme theory is a central part of any public policy because it should spell out the assumptions about how resources and activities will lead to expected results. As Rossi *et al.* note,

if the program’s goals and objectives do not relate in a reasonable way to the social conditions the program is intended to improve, or the assumptions and expectations embodied in the program’s design do not represent a credible approach to bringing about that improvement, there is little prospect that the program will be effective (Rossi *et al.* 2019: 60).

While simplistic assumptions about people’s behaviour and representation should be avoided, “no major insight is gained by simply mentioning the fairly obvious fact that reality is complex and that the density of interconnections between processes is boundless” (Grin 2003a: 42).

In policy design, the best way to outline a programme theory is usually by working backwards, that is, starting from the objectives and then design the path to achieve them given the resources available. The programme theory of a policy can be explicit if a language policy is overt, or implicit in covert language policies.

Although the methodological challenges of “actual planning” (to use Joan Rubin’s words) - establishing goals, selecting means, and predicting outcomes - were already clear in the early days of the discipline (see Rubin 1971; Thorburn 1971), the systematic examination of the programme theory of language policies from a public policy perspective is more recent. See, for example, Grin (2003b) for policies aimed at protecting and promoting minority languages, and Gazzola (2016) for the promotion of multilingualism in the public administration.

Policy instruments. Policy instruments are the concrete means “by which governments attempt to induce individuals and groups to make decisions and take actions compatible with public policies” (Schneider and Ingram 1990: 527, quoted in Landry and Varone 2005: 108). A public policy plan should define a combination of instruments that are suitable to achieve the policy goals. In public policy studies it is common to make a distinction between four types of policy instruments, depending on the resource the government uses. This is after the taxonomy developed by Christopher Hood (Hood 1986).⁵ The first resource is named ‘authority’. This resource is used in direct regulations based on prohibitions, obligations, the granting of rights and the application of sanctions. The second resource available to government is ‘treasury’. There are several examples of policy instruments based on the exploitation of this resource such as grants, subsidies, and taxes. Hood names the third resource ‘nodality’, and it refers to the fact that the government is a key nodal link in the policy network, and it can both receive, disseminate or hide information in accordance with its position in the informal and formal information channels of the network. There are different examples of policy instruments that use this resource, e.g., setting benchmarking, and organising information campaigns, or, on the other extreme, censorship. The fourth resource consists in the organisational capacity of the public apparatus, which can provide goods and services directly (typically via the public administration) or contract out to entities linked to it by contractual ties.

In Gazzola (2021), I have defined ‘language policy instruments’ (LPI) as the set of policy instruments used in LPP, that is, the means by which governments deliberately attempt to influence the status, the acquisition and the corpus of a language with a view to inducing individuals and groups to change their linguistic practices and attitudes in a certain direction that is consistent with the objectives of a language policy. The direct language regulation of labels and commercial signs is an example of a language policy instrument using authority resource. Subsidizing publications in a minority language is an example of language policy instrument using treasury. An information campaign to reduce stigma associated with the use of a minority language – e.g., informing speakers about the possibility of using it for official purposes – is an example of policy instrument using the nodality resource. Bilingual front offices are a straightforward example of this language policy instrument using the resource ‘organisation’.

⁵ The taxonomy is generally known with the acronym “NATO” for nodality, authority, treasury, and organisation.

Usually, any language policy makes use of a complex set of LPI. A policy of promoting bilingualism in the public administration of a country or region, for example, may be based on instruments of a regulatory nature such as giving preference to candidates who have a certificate of knowledge of the minority language. A financial instrument such as the bilingualism bonus (i.e. an annual salary bonus for bilingual staff) is implemented in Canada, Belgium, Slovenia, and some regions in Northern Italy to promote language acquisition among civil servants (Maltais 2018; Mazzacani 2021). Free language training for officials who must learn a co-official language is an organisational tool. An awareness-raising campaign to solicit applications for civil service from native speakers of minority language is an example of a language policy instrument that uses an information-persuasive mode. For a discussion about language policy instruments in a comparative perspective, see Cardinal, Gaspard and Léger (2015), Gazzola (2021), and Cardinal (2022, forthcoming).

Indicator system. Indicators are a very important component of policy design. Without a system of indicators that translate data into meaningful information we are not able to check whether the policy is developing as planned and is leading to the expected results. A system of indicators requires a corresponding data collection system to populate them. The information system of a language policy is defined as the set of indicators used and the procedures for collecting and processing data. A system of indicators must include input, output, and outcome indicators. The latter are the most common type of indicators because they refer to the objectives of a language policy, e.g., promoting the knowledge and use of a language in society.

A broad language policy usually requires a sufficiently comprehensive set of indicators that reflect and represent different aspects of the complex target variables, for example, linguistic vitality, language use, and linguistic justice. The methodology of indicator design consists of breaking down complex variables into a set of simpler dimensions that can eventually be translated into measurable indicators (see Gazzola and Grin 2017: 97-100 for details). The variable ‘language use’, for example, can be broken down into ‘number of speakers’ and ‘frequency of use’ and these sub-variables can in turn be articulated into areas such as family, friends, work and official uses (Iannàccaro and Dell’Aquila 2011).

As Maggino and Zumbo note,

the process of measurement in the social sciences requires a robust conceptual definition, a consistent collection of observations, and a consequent analysis of the relationship between observations and defined concepts. The measurement objective that relates concepts to reality is represented by indicators. From this perspective, an indicator is not a simple crude bit of statistical information but represents a measure organically connected to a conceptual model aimed at knowing different aspects of reality. (2012: 202).

In other words, indicators are not mere numbers; instead, they are measuring tools that acquire meaning within a given programme theory.⁶

3.4 Implementation

The implementation phase refers to how governments put policies into effect. Implementation is the set of processes which, after formulation and adoption, are aimed at achieving the objectives of the

⁶ Indicators are the object of a vast literature in the social sciences, see Land, Michalos, and Sirgy (2012) for an introduction.

language policy. The implementation produces outputs and outcomes. Policy implementation can involve the development of specific action plans to steer and manage the implementation of language policy. Such plans concretely indicate who should do what, when and how. It would be misleading, however, to look at this phase as a mere execution of pre-determined instructions. Firstly, implementers, in particular middle-level managers such as school principals and heads of units, often benefit from a certain degree of autonomy and flexibility in deciding how to concretely administer policy. Secondly, the successful implementation of a public policy requires the cooperation and the direct involvement of various actors such as simple public servants, officers, teachers, and private actors or non-governmental organisations and association to which the execution of the policy has been contracted out. These actors ultimately implement a language policy plan on the ground. An excellent programme can fail if due attention is not paid to the implementation procedures, to the training and empowerment of those involved, and to the clarity of communication and information flows between those who lead and those who implement the policy. Resistance of civil servants to policy implementation can hinder the success of a language policy (see Mévellec and Cardinal 2020 for a discussion).

The collection of data to monitor and control the implementation of the policy is called ‘monitoring’. Data can be employed to populate indicators. The study of this phase includes the exam of the practical conditions of implementation and its operationalisation. It requires particular attention to be paid to matters of organisation and delivery, because language policies are typically implemented through an institutional system centred on public administration, often in interaction with other agents.

Considerable attention has been given in LPP research to the implementation phase of language policy, and to potential tensions between official plans and their actual realisation. Different disciplines are involved in the study of language policy implementation, including the sociology of language, public administration studies, sociology of organisations, as well as different research methods, e.g. ethnography (Hornberger and Johnson 2011; McCarty 2015), that inform about actual practices on the ground.

3.5 Evaluation

Evaluation refers to the processes by which the results of policies are assessed by governmental or societal actors. Unless it is completely ignored, evaluation can provide feedback to the public debate, and its outcome may be the re-conceptualisation of policy problems and solutions, the continuation of the policy or its abandonment.

A range of disciplines are involved in evaluation in addition to the sociolinguistic analysis of individuals’ language practices and representations. Legal studies, for example, focus on the ex-post formal evaluation of compliance of the policy with the legislation in force. Technical policy evaluation focuses on the retrospective analysis of problems in policy design and implementation, and on the empirical estimation of outcomes, benefits and costs. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques can be useful in this respect. Using data collected during monitoring (and possibly other external sources), technical policy evaluation provides a final judgment on the policy based on some relevant criteria. The most important ones are effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. Evaluating the effectiveness of a language policy means understanding whether and to what extent the set objectives have been achieved. In this regard, it is important, if possible, to have reliable data and robust

analytical tools and techniques to separate the effects of the policy from other concomitant causes (see Morgan and Winship 2015 for an overview). The criterion of efficiency (here interpreted as cost-effectiveness) refers to the relationship between the results obtained and the resources employed. Assessing equity, in the public policy approach, does not mean carrying out an ethical examination, but rather identifying the distributional consequences that the language policy has had on stakeholders. An ex-post evaluation of the equity of a language policy plan in education, for example, could examine whether teaching a minority language in public education has been homogeneous or whether it has neglected certain groups; whether all pupils have benefited more or less equally from the lessons or whether children from disadvantaged social and family backgrounds have had difficulties in accessing schools or online courses.

In certain countries, the periodic technical evaluation of language policies is required by national or regional laws or regulations, see for example, Art. 8 of the “Swiss Ordinance on the National Languages and Understanding between the Linguistic Communities” (Languages Ordinance, LangO); and Art. 25 and 29 of the Regional Law 18/12/2007 of the Italian Autonomous Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia (“Norms for the protection and the promotion of the Friulian language”). See also the sixth section of the Canadian “Policy on Official Languages”.⁷

Evaluations can be carried out also by independent academics as part of their research. Grin and Vaillancourt (1999) study the cost-effectiveness of language policies in favour of minority languages in Wales, Ireland and the Basque Country. Cappellari and Di Paolo (2018), for example, estimate the effects of bilingual education on individuals’ income in Catalonia exploiting a school reform that in 1983 established Catalan as a medium of instruction in primary and compulsory secondary schools alongside Spanish. Ramachandran (2017) finds a positive effect of mother tongue instruction on human capital formation in Ethiopia, where a reform of the language of instruction was adopted in 1994. For an overview of the literature, see Gazzola, Grin and Wickström (2016).

4 Language Policy Levels and Public Policy Types

It is worth discussion two questions that better locate the public policy approach to LPP in the relevant academic literature. The first concerns the level of analysis, that is, relationships between public language policy on the one hand, and other forms of handling multilingualism at the level of organisations on the other hand. The second question is whether there are some general aspects that make language policy unique from other types of public policies.

The term language policy is sometimes used to describe decisions and regulations of private and public non-governmental organisations. Thus, the term ‘corporate language policy’ describes rules and guidelines that are “developed specifically for a business organisation or a unit within an organisation, for example the language policy of the customer service department of a company” (Sanden 2015: 1100). Language policy in higher education refers to the set of rules, decisions and course of action to deal with linguistic diversity in a university (see examples in Conceição 2020; Vila Moreno and Bretxa 2014). Note that I am not referring here to government language policy regarding higher education institutions, e.g., South Africa’s *Language policy framework for public higher education* adopted in 2020 by the Department of Higher Education and Training.⁸ I am

⁷ <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=26160>

⁸ See https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202011/43860gon1160.pdf. See also Ngcobo and Barnes (2021).

referring to how single universities deal with linguistic diversity in their various activities, including teaching, administration with students, dissemination of research results and communication towards the public. Language policy in the administration of higher education has become an important topic of research in the last decade, as a result of the process of ‘internationalisation’ of universities, which in practice has often entailed the replacement of national languages with English both in teaching and research (Conceição and Caruso 2022; Wilkinson and Gabriels 2021; Gazzola 2018; Maraschio and De Martino 2012; Hultgren *et al.* 2014).

From a theoretical point of view, however, the language policy of corporations and organisations are not very different from other forms of internal regulations, e.g., personnel policies. Personnel policies essentially establish internal rules, procedures and guidelines for hiring employees, governing employee responsibilities and dealing with employment problems, such as insubordination or discrimination. This type of policy is not a form of public policy but a corporate or organisational response to a certain need.

In general, there are two aspects that distinguish governments’ language policy from the language policy of organisations, i.e., the scope of the policy and its instruments. Firstly, the range of language issues addressed in government’s language policy is much broader than language policies at the level of corporations, non-profit organisations, and research institutions. Official language policy can pursue broad goals that, at least from the point of view of political actors who initiate and drive the policy process, are relevant at the level of society (whether national or local). Relevant examples include establishing official bilingualism or multilingualism, promoting and supporting minority languages, teaching foreign or second languages, integrating the language of adult migrants and refugees, and promoting a national language at the international level. It is important to recall (see also Section 2 above) that the term ‘government’ does not include only the central executive. Language policies of businesses and organisations, by contrast, have more focused and limited goals, and they are typically a by-product of decisions aimed at pursuing the core goals of the organisation (see Grin and Gazzola 2013 for a discussion). For example, the business of businesses is business, that is, pursuing profit. The statutory goals of a university (note, I am referring to individual universities not academia as a whole) are to produce and disseminate knowledge, and to attract students. Corporate language policy and language policy of universities are functional to the achievement of these institutional goals.

Secondly, government language policy can use a broader set of policy instruments that corporations or organisations simply do not have at their disposal. The most important one is the legitimate use of coercion. Government has the capacity to set laws, orders, and regulations, and to enforce them through the police and tribunals. Government can levy taxes. By contrast, the scope and the set of interventions on language matters that corporations and organisations can develop is generally more limited, and it constrained by existing laws and norms.

The relationships between language policy at the macro-level (e.g., the national government official language policy) and the meso-level (e.g., corporate language policy) is a relevant and important subject in LPP research, and the reason for this lies in the complex interplay between the two levels. As Grin shows (2022), the complexity does not stem from the fact that language policy is ‘difficult’, but rather from the fact that the incentives and constraints faced by actors at the macro and meso levels are not necessarily aligned, and indeed they might clearly diverge. For example, some private corporations and universities may have more to gain from linguistic uniformity (e.g.,

promoting the use of a lingua franca in business and research), while society as a whole has an interest in preserving and promoting the vitality and the use of the national/local languages in all domains of social life.

It is worth stressing that I do not deny that also private actors or individuals can undertake initiatives to plan a language, and that these initiatives can be influential. Lexicographers such as Samuel Johnson in England and Noah Webster in the United States of America, for example, were involved in language planning by providing guidance regarding usage and perceived correctness. The creation of international auxiliary languages such as Esperanto or Interlingua is another example of extreme language planning (see Gobbo, this volume). These cases, however, usually are restricted to corpus planning. Single private citizens alone do not have the means to design and implement decisions that significantly affect the allocation of functions of a language at the societal level.

I conclude with some remarks about specific nature of language policy as opposed to other forms of language policy. In policy studies, a distinction is often made between *substantive* and *institutional* policies. A substantive public policy aims at solving a problem politically defined as collective in nature (Knoepfel *et al.* 2007), while an institutional public policy regards the transformation of State's organisation, e.g., a change in the structure of public offices or a re-organisation of human resources. Institutional public policies aim at creating the conditions for the accomplishment of the tasks of the state, including the implementation of substantive policies (Knoepfel *et al.* 2007). This distinction, however, is not always straightforward in LPP. While teaching foreign languages in schools to improve pupils' skills is a clear example of substantive language policy, the choice of a set of official and working languages and the implementation of multilingualism in the public administration of a bilingual country has *both* substantive and institutional elements. A second important difference between language policy and other forms of public policy such as the provision of unemployment benefits, public pensions schemes, or healthcare, consists in the fact that there is no zero option in language policy. Although governments may claim it practices benign neglect in regards to religions, it cannot practice it in regards to languages because governments must decide on a language in which they will conduct their business (Kymlicka 1995; De Schutter 2007). In legal and military domains (i.e., the army, police, courts and prisons), as well as in public administration (i.e., tax office and the register, the language used on banknotes, names of places), the government exerts an exclusive competence, meaning that private actors are not allowed to provide goods and services unless they are regulated by the government. In other important domains of social life such as education and healthcare, government plays often a central role. Publicly provided services in these domains require the use of at least one language to be delivered. The choice of which languages to use, however, is not a neutral act in as much as the population on a territory speaks different native languages (May 2005). As a result of the pervasive role of government in modern societies, therefore, is it misleading to oppose LPP to a *laissez-faire* stance to language matters (see Gazzola 2014 for a discussion). The correct distinction is only between different degrees of language policy intervention.

5 Conclusions

This chapter provides an introduction to the study of LPP from a public policy studies perspective. It presents the public policy approach to LPP and its relationship with other approaches in LPP research. It explains how the policy cycle model can be used both to study and to plan language policy. This model is suited to organise knowledge about the practice and the process of language planning, i.e., the design, implementation, and evaluation of language policies. It is desirable for LPP as a discipline

to pay more attention to theoretical and methodological contribution of policy sciences. First, there is a clear demand for such expertise from public bodies called upon to plan and implement language policies. Secondly, as noted, among others, by Thomas Ricento (2006: 11), in order to advocate specific policies or policy directions scholars and decision makers ought to be able to demonstrate empirically and conceptually the advantages and disadvantages of language policies as well as their distributive effects on the relevant groups of speakers.

