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Language planning and policy in education: teaching English

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Abstract

This article provides an overview and research synthesis of the literature on language planning and policy with a strong focus on *language in education planning*. LPP (Language Planning and Policy) is a multidisciplinary subject of sociolinguistics concerned with both direct and indirect actions that influence various aspects of language (Payne, 2006). There is a significant and fundamental strong relationship between LPP and education since each requires the other to coexist and function properly. As every participant and representative of the educational field helps language policies spread, develop and succeed as planned, the academic sector is the principal advocate of LPP. This review of literature suggests that this topic is of great relevance for teachers, in general, to make them aware of their professional roles in the classroom based on the rationale for language policy development and execution, its influence in their classrooms and in their own roles.

Keywords: *Language planning and policy; language in education planning; foreign languages; ELT; SEP; Universidad de Guadalajara; ELT teachers*

Planificación y política lingüística en la educación: enseñanza de lengua inglesa

Resumen

Este artículo proporciona una descripción general y una síntesis de investigación de la literatura existente sobre la planificación y política lingüística, con un fuerte enfoque en el ámbito educativo. Planificación y Política del Lenguaje conocida por sus siglas en inglés como LPP (*Language Policy and Planning*) es un campo sociolingüístico interdisciplinario que se ocupa de decisiones explícitas e implícitas que influyen en muchas características de las lenguas (Payne, 2006). Existe una fuerte relación fundamental entre LPP y la educación, ya que cada uno requiere del otro para coexistir correctamente. Como todos los participantes y representantes del medio escolar ayudan a que las políticas lingüísticas se difundan, desarrollen y tengan el éxito previsto, el sector académico es el principal impulsor de LPP. Esta revisión de la literatura sugiere que este tema es de gran relevancia para los docentes para que sean conscientes de sus roles profesionales considerando la justificación del desarrollo y ejecución de éstas su influencia en el aula y en sus propios roles.

Palabras clave: *Planificación y política lingüística; planificación lingüística en la educación; lenguas extranjeras; ELT; SEP; Universidad de Guadalajara; profesores de ELT*

Introduction

Within the structure and the organization of institutions, there are decisions which operate as general guidelines to outline their plans to efficiently address and manage the diverse challenges these corporations might face. These decisions are plans of action suggested and adopted by different organizations: from the government to natural and legal persons. Specific decisions are made and undertaken based on the nature of the institutions. For example, in the educational context, schools perform under educational-derived set of rules and principles to satisfy and achieve the requirements and conditions predisposed by the community. That being the case, one of the most indispensable aspects to be determined and settled within the educational institutions is the medium of instruction: a language. Therefore, the decisions and actions taken around the language to be used for literacy and to educate, not only influence and affects the language vitality and status, but also the speakers' lives of that language.

The sociolinguistic interdisciplinary field concerned with both explicit and implicit decisions that influence various aspects of languages is called “Language Planning and Policy” (LPP). Unfortunately, although teachers' roles and actions in their classrooms are based on and follow the regulations created by language planning, LPP is not a widely discussed subject in teacher professional development. As a result, teachers must be knowledgeable about this topic since LPP is at the heart of their professional activity in the classroom.

In this research synthesis, the existing literature on Language Planning and Policy with a strong focus on the ELT context will be explored next.

A brief overview of Language Planning and Policy

“A nation is defined by its territory and its language”
(Bernard Spolsky, 2012, p. 4)

In Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) view, planning is part of our human nature, it is a strategy that we, humans, execute for “the development, and increasingly the conservation, of human resources” (p.4); notion that the authors draw a parallel with the purpose of language planning and policy work. The conservation of human resources is crucial for the development of a nation, and about language as a human resource, language planning emerged as a strategy to address the new linguistic issues that newly independent governments were facing (Spolsky, 2012). Since people

in the same community speaking mutually unintelligible languages, result in problems in communication, the language planning intention is to bring out a common language to build a strong and effective communication to facilitate trade and community management.

A great starting point for the process of planifying and placing a language policy to affect a community was proposed in Norway by Einar Haugen (1959) in the article: *Planning for a Standard Language in Modern Norway*. In this article, Haugen defines language planning as a process of creation for a standard lexicon, orthography, and grammar for the usage of speakers within a speech group that is not homogenous. It is a procedure by which descriptive linguistics transcends and enters a field where decision-making is necessary to select from a broad variety of linguistic forms (Haugen, 1959, p.8).

That is to say, Language Planning is the premeditated and purposeful actions to influence and adjust a community's linguistic behavior for mere social concerns rather than linguistic ones. To illustrate, the LPP project of a nation decides the specific “roles and functions of particular languages and varieties of a language” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996, p. 434). In this regard, a language goes through a planning process (e.g., a standardization process) to adjust its characteristics to the ones needed for the role of an official language and then to be used by the educational institution, the government, the media and so forth.

Moreover, even though language planning and the language policy go hand in hand, still both terms are often used interchangeably; however, both concepts are separate facets of the language change process (Kaplan, & Baldauf, 1997, p. XI). Tollefson (2011) states that while language planning, which involves public-policy concerns, has to do with the intentional attempt to affect the status, development, and organization of languages; language policy is the guidelines for the language structure, use and acquisition, established and implemented by official agents such as governmental institutions, among others (p. 357).

Language Planning Frameworks

Language Planning and Policy, in literature, has presented a number of approaches and frameworks in an attempt to understand the various forms of planning and the engagement that planning undertakes. The first contributor was Haugen with his fourfold model (cited in Hornberger, 2006, p. 27) which focused on corpus planning, namely, the actions intended to shape the form or structure of a language: 1. Selection of a language variety to serve as the foundation for a

new standard, 2. Codification such as the determination of phonology, orthography, morphology and rule of word formation, 3. Implementation and the diffusion of the new codified norm through the society, and 4. Evaluation which is the attempt to keep spreading the norm and adapt it to the new communication needs (Wiley, 1996, p. 118).

Then, according to Bianco (2010), in the work of Heinz Kloss (1969), the primary elements of LP were solidified with the addition of the term 'status planning', which refers to how societies use laws and regulations to assign roles and functions to languages (e.g., medium of instruction and official language). (p.144).

Then, twenty years later, a third method of linguistic preparation was developed (Hornberger, 2006, p. 28). According to Cooper, language acquisition choices are made with the goal of increasing the number of individuals who speak or use a language (Wiley, 1996, p.117). Moreover, as Johnson and Ricento (2013) remark, "the inclusion of acquisition planning to the established status/corpus dichotomy gave educational language policy a sort of official status within the field and, since then, it has become an important area of research and scholarship" (p.11).

Finally, Hornberger (1994, 2006) presented a six dimensional 'integrative framework' which integrates various LPP frameworks consolidated by "three decades of language planning scholarship based on Ferguson (1968), Kloss (1968), Stewart (1968), Neustupny (1974), Haugen (1983), Nahir (1984), and Cooper (1989)" (Ricento & Hornberger (1996)" (p. 49). It is intended as "a tool for beginning to answer the question of how to develop which language/literacies for which purposes" (Throop, 2007, p.49).

Table 1

Hornberger's (1994) Language planning goals: An integrative framework

Approaches	Policy Planning (On form)	Cultivation Planning (On function)
Types	Goals	Goals
Status Planning (About uses of language)	Standardization Status Officialization Nationalization Proscription	Revival Maintenance Interlingual Communication International Intranational Spread
Acquisition Planning (About users of language)	Group Education/School Literature Religion Mass Media Work	Reacquisition Maintenance Foreign Language/ Second Language Shift
Corpus Planning (About language)	Standardization Corpus Auxiliary code Graphisation	Modernization Lexical Stylistic Renovation Purification Reform Stylistic simplification Terminology unification

Note: From "Literacy and language planning" by Hornberger (1994, p. 78).

Language-Planning in Education

In the planning and policy making of a language, all aspects are important to obtain the expected outcomes, but how well would the plan and the policy be without the agents who spread, maintain, and use the "planned" language? As stated by Karam (1974), the cultivation planning phase is an on-going process where the formal and informal aspects of a language are conventionalized; consequently, the conventionalization process of the language acts in two areas: 1. the codification of the language (e.g., dictionaries), and 2. The spreading of such codification by educational and non-educational representatives (p. 115). Within the language planning and policy representatives, those involved can be categorized into four basic areas: 1. the government, 2. education, 3. non/quasi government organizations (e.g., churches, banks, the British Council, etc.), and 4. other organizations (e.g., Olympic committees) (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, pp. 5-6). Furthermore, Ricento and Hornberger (1996) underline that organizations like publishers of books and journals, broadcast media, and educational institutions have a bigger influence

on linguistic guidelines development than governments and play essential functions as policy-makers and replicators (pp. 415-416).

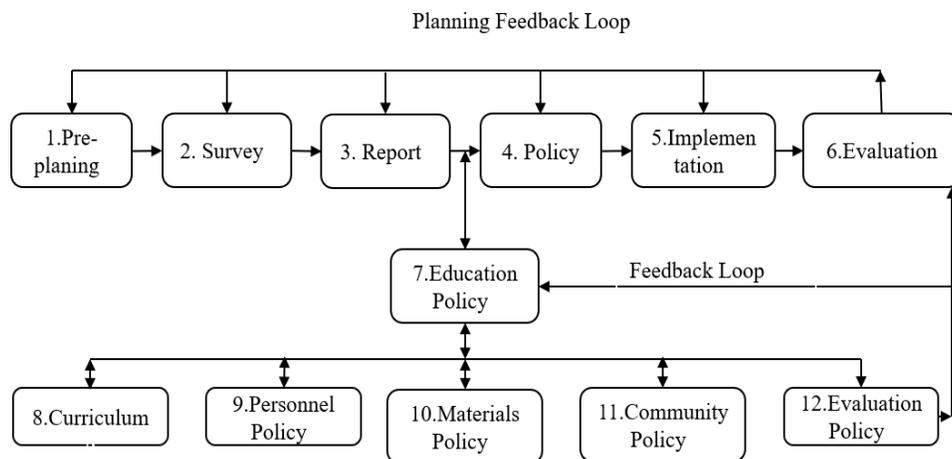
With regards to education, this institution is identified as being a principal area of language policy (Spolsky, 2012, p.10) and the most powerful tool for bringing about language transformation. Furthermore, all language planning that involves education is known as *language-in-education planning* (Paulston & McLaughlin, 1994, p.53), or *Acquisition Planning* as Cooper called it (Cooper 1989, as cited in Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p.122).

Foreign languages, second languages, first or native languages, as well as language variations are all covered by the educational institution. In fact, it mostly deals with standard versions of languages, such as the official national language and foreign language standard versions. In addition, according to Cenoz and Gorter (2012), “language policy in education aims at providing the possibility of acquiring communicative competence in additional languages” (p.315).

Evidently, language-in-education planning follows a different process than the general language planning since it affects only the education sector and not the entire society. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), in their schema for the policy of language-planning in education development, describe five stages of language-planning in education (see Figure 1): starting with the 7th stage, which is the *curriculum policy* which has to do with the selection of the language to be taught and curriculum matters based on that language. Then, the 8th stage is about training the *personnel policy* (in-service/ pre-service) on language pedagogy and the target language; the teacher role is significant and the heart of language policy since they are perceived as the ones who carry out policies others have stated such as “English only” in the ESL classroom (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p.417), Next, in the *materials policy* stage, it is decided the content and the methodology to be used for language teaching; this stage has a very essential role in a policy for a linguistic guideline in a curriculum since language teaching, evidently, always must have a content to be taught, and resources in which the content is encompassed and represented are necessary, such a textbooks. Following, the attitudes of *community* (teachers, students, parents, etc.) towards the language policy. Finally, the *evaluation policy* that works with delimitation of the assessment process and procedures as evidence that the language-in education planning is cost-effective (pp. 123-135).

Figure 1

Schema for the development policy of language-planning in education



Note: From “Language planning from practice to theory” by Kaplan & Baldauf (1997, p 124).

Language Planning and Policy in Education: Foreign Languages

Apart from the planning and policy making of national official languages in countries, additional languages, such as foreign languages, are also an essential module of language-in-education planning and policy and are always part of the school curriculum; “moreover, this type of language planning and policy is developed from the national and regional level to the school and even at the classroom level” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2012, p.301).

English plays a unique role in language education policy since it is the most spoken foreign language and the one that is typically proposed for usage in education programs.; therefore “language policy has a direct impact on TESOL” (Judd, 1981, p.59), which divides English approaches based on its status into four categories: English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL), English as an additional language (EAL), and English as a language of wider communication (ELWC). These four categories are the basis of the policies applied in a curriculum since the objectives differ from each other and “no single ESOL curriculum or institutional strategy will suit all circumstances” (p.65).

Whereas English is the most chosen language as an additional, French, German, and Spanish are often chosen as third or fourth languages; for example, in European countries, the language of instructions at primary level is the students’ first language, whereas a second language such as

English, German or French, becomes the language of instructions in the last years of the primary level (Cenoz & Gorter, 2012, pp. 302-305).

A well-known and extensively used general guide for the planning and policy of foreign languages, particularly European languages, has many major implications to the development of policy tools: *The Common European Framework of References for Languages*, developed by the Council of Europe. Policymakers frequently use it to design and develop curricular guidelines and content, elaborate syllabuses, and produce teaching materials such as textbooks, as well as assessment and examination instruments. The CEFR provides a set of proficiency scales divided into basic user (A1-A2), independent user (B1-B2), and proficient user (C1-C2) and approaches the four different skills for each different level of proficiency. For that reason, the CEFR takes a key role in developing policies.

Aside from the CEFR, the Council of Europe created another document that, rather than being a normative document, serves as a guide for policy making and practice self-analysis and evaluation. The 'Language Education Profile,' which is based on the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*, concludes that language education policy can relate to the specific needs and circumstances of a community (for example, a country, city, school, etc.) as well as the broader European context (Cenoz & Gorter, 2012, pp.313-314).

Furthermore, in Central America, the decisions made about curricular matters are based on and occur in two recognizable and contrasting areas: the public and the private; the approaches and methods used in both situations for language planning and policy implementation are different. For example, teachers in the public sector are compelled to teach English in all conditions (command driving force), that is to say, for example, that even when teachers do not have all the resources they must teach. Whereas on the contrary, in the private sector students and individuals interested in learning the language not only seek for the best preparation but they can also afford it (demand driving force) (McGuire, 1996, p.606). As a result, the quality and reputation of both educational cases are frequently contrasted. To illustrate, Cronquist and Fiszbein, (2007) provide a real example of this matter: "In Mexico, the option of receiving additional English language training is more common for children attending private schools, but it has also become an increasingly common practice among public school students" (p.5, translated by the author).

The English Language Planning and Policy Situation in Mexico

As a result of "Mexico's geographical proximity and strong cultural and economic ties to the USA" (Sayer, 2015, p. 260), English is also the most popular additional language featured in Mexican schools' curriculum, and the most frequently chosen by students.

Considering the previously noted distinction between public and private educational institutions, Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) defines the content for English teaching in public schools, whilst the content of commercial textbooks determines the curriculum of private schools (Terborg, et al. 2007, p.170). SEP is the federal agency in charge of providing and regulating public education in Mexico, and it is responsible for the normative role of basic education (e.g., kindergarten, primary school, and secondary school) as well as *escuelas normales* (Teacher Training institutions that educates and prepares Mexican teachers). In 2017, SEP proposed a *Programa Nacional de Inglés* (PRONI) aiming to strengthen the internationalization of education policies through an approach that considers the coherence of the curricula by including areas of academic education in which, the mother tongue (Spanish or an indigenous language) as well as a foreign language, in this case English, are taught. (SEP, 2017, p. 23-24). Furthermore, its goal is to develop, strengthen, and incorporate English as a foreign language teaching and learning in public pre-schools, general primary, multi-grade, indigenous, regular and full-time, general and technical secondary schools (SEP, 2021, p.45). According to SEP (2018) PRONI's general process is divided into seven stages: 1. Dissemination, 2. Request for support, 3. Selection of beneficiaries, 4. Resource allocation, 5. Resource execution, 6.- Progress report, and 7. Assessment (p. 32).

The major objective of PRONI, when it was first presented, 20 years ago, Mexican students who graduate from mandatory education (middle school education) must have a B2 language proficiency level according to *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*; a B2 language of proficiency is categorized by the CEFRL as an "independent user".

Therefore, the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in mandatory education curriculum in Mexico consists of three phases: 1. contact and familiarization (from preschool to second grade), 2. basic English competence and proficiency (from third grade of primary school to third grade of secondary education), and 3. intermediate competence and proficiency (from first grade of high school to the sixth grade).

SEP teachers are expected to have at least two proficiency levels above the one they teach, for example, in preschool education students must reach an A1 English level of proficiency, teachers must have a B1 English level of proficiency to be able to teach those students. In order to be able to do so, the institution launched a call for selection and hiring of English teachers to train pre-service teachers in *Escuelas Normales*. In this situation, the English preparation of pre-service teachers is offered in four phases of desirable levels of Proficiency linked to the semesters of the *Normal* education degree: first and second semesters they should get from A1 to B1 level, third and fourth semesters, they should have from B1 to B2 levels, fifth and sixth semester, they should have from B2 to C1, and finally, seventh and eighth semesters are expected to be able to teach English.

Moreover, the PRONI materials offered to teachers and students are different based on the level of instruction and include physical and digital materials such as textbooks. The project proposed by PRONI was revised and recognized by the University of Cambridge (SEP, 2017, p. 45).

Unfortunately, as a consequence of the lack of a PRONI's assessment program there is a deficiency of data about the development of language performance of students and teachers (SEP, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, as from an evaluation of consistency and results done concerning the years 2017-2018 of the National English Program by *El Colegio de México*, it was suggested that the project should go beyond PRONI's current absence of teacher certification method to incorporate a program of continuing education and training (p. 64). This is crucial to be done not only to assess teachers but students since it will serve as the final verification that the program is working.

In fact, it is common that schools often use optional examinations to assess students' English competence, or that students and English teachers look for external options to assess themselves apart from the ones provided in PRONI to meet the requirements of Language Policies in Mexico. For example, some of the international standardized assessments used are the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Trinity College London's Integrated Skills in English Examination (ISE), the TOEFL iBT via the Internet, TOEFL iTP, among others.

Besides, the government of Mexico created the *Certificación Nacional de Nivel de Idiomas* (National Language Level Certification), a national test that only assesses foreign language competency (CENNI). CENNI has its own measurement standards that match with the CEFR levels. This exam is not required by the government, but it is available to students who want to

demonstrate their ability in a foreign language such as English (Cronquist & Fiszbein, 2007, p. 37).

In the context of English Language Planning and Policy in higher education in Mexico, for example Universities, the situation is different from that in basic education. According to Terborg et. Al. (2007), the Mexican university's objectives to offer language courses are that students interested have a chance to study another language to be able to obtain a scholarship, or to be able to graduate by fulfilling the school's requirement of speaking another language (p. 171). Thus, in this context, the learning of a second language in Mexican universities, in this case English, is not mandatory as it is in the Mexican basic education level; most of the time, these courses are extra-curricular or elective (Mendoza, 2021, p.139).

To give an example of English Language Planning and Policies in Mexican Universities, the *Política Institucional de Lenguas Extranjeras* (Foreign Language Institutional Policy) of the University of Guadalajara promotes the use of a language other than Spanish, primarily English, among the university community and its social environment, as well as contributing to the development of students' global competencies so that they can perform in global contexts, in various work, social, and professional settings (Universidad de Guadalajara, n.d., p. 4). In addition, the main UDG's objective is to have a functional bilingual university community who is able to perform in international contexts with the use of a particular additional language: English.

As well as SEP, the University of Guadalajara follows the CEFR and based on it specifies the level of proficiency goals for each educational level of the university framework: it proposes that graduate students from high school should have an A2 level of proficiency, graduate students from the bachelor's degree should have a B1, and finally, students from a graduate program should have a B2 level.

In fact, according to the institutional language policy from the University of Guadalajara, students must have an English Language Certification such as the TOEFL-ITP equivalent to a score of 450 to apply for national graduate scholarships (like CONACYT), a score of 550 to for international exchange scholarships at English-speaking or European Universities, and an average of a 450 score to graduate (Gacel-Ávila, n.d., p.6).

That being the case, to help students to meet the requirements demanded from their university, in 2015, the UDG's Rector's Council at that moment approved the Institutional Foreign

Language Policy of the University of Guadalajara and authorized the creation of the institutional foreign language program as the one responsible for its implementation. Then, in 2017, the General University Council authorized the establishment of the Coordination of Foreign Languages, which reports to the General Academic Coordination and oversees the Institutional Foreign Language Program activities. The Foreign Language Coordination Office is divided into three units to carry out its duties: Teacher Professional Development Unit; Programs Unit; and Certification Support Evaluation Unit (flip.cga.udg.mx, n.d.).

Subsequently, the University of Guadalajara's Language Unit through the Foreign Language Institutional Program (FLIP) in cooperation with Proulex (a language institution and a company of the University of Guadalajara that has been providing and marketing English, French, German, Mandarin Chinese, and computer courses since 1987) developed "Jobs", the English program designed for University of Guadalajara students.

According to FLIP (n.d.) the *Jobs* method achieves the goal of preparing students to function in the world, socially, and at work with English as a Second Language (ESL). Jobs students are exposed to themes linked to their academic background (English for Professional Purposes) and in five primary subject areas: 1. English for professional success, 2. Health Sciences, 3. Exact sciences and engineering, 4. Social sciences and humanities, and 5. Business (English for Specific Purposes), as opposed to the general approach (general English) utilized in high school studies. Moreover, students are expected to reach a B2 level after completing the 6 levels from the program (FLIP).

Then, as reported by Serrano Jauregui (2021), after completing the six levels (equivalent to 700 hours, more than 200 virtual hours, during six semesters), between one and three thousand students from different university centers of the University of Guadalajara (UDG) graduated from the jobs program and received a diploma (www.udg.mx).

With regard to the English teachers' profile in the University, high school teachers should have a B2 level of proficiency, and a *Teacher Training* along with a *Teaching Knowledge Test* (TKT). Then, teachers from the undergraduate education sector, should have as minimum a C1 level of proficiency, a bachelors' degree in Teaching English or any other bachelors' degree along with a TKT certification. Finally, teachers from postgraduate education should have, as well, a C1 level

of proficiency and a master's in teaching English or any other master's degree along with a Teaching English Certification.

Conclusion: Teachers as Language Planning and Policy Agents

As far as we are aware now, educational institutions are obligated to adopt well-thought-out language policies and well-constructed plans for implementing such policies to achieve academic success. Furthermore, an optimal implementation of the policies cannot be done without the help of the LPP agents: language policies that come from the government or the community are submitted to schools, then the academic head of those institutions decide which are the best options to undertake the new policies' challenges such as which book to use, which variant to teach, how often apply assessments, etc.; however, at the end, teachers are the main actors and influencers of these policies who decide which ones to implement and recreate based on the particularity of their classrooms, in other words, to shape them to meet their students' needs and their reality, as Cray (1997) stated, "language policies are most commonly developed and implemented by individuals far removed from the classroom; at the classroom level, language policy is realized in different ways depending on teachers' perceptions and understanding of the policy and the local conditions of implementation" (p. 36). It is contradictory to assert that teachers are not directly involved in LPP. Language Planning and Policy does have a strong impact on teachers' professions. Educators are active LPP agents, rather than passive; they consciously or unconsciously, are part of the formulation, development and application of the policies stated by their academic head department. Besides, consciously, or unconsciously "as policy actors, the language teachers' appropriation of regional-language policy helps simultaneously to reproduce and challenge existing ideologies in the school environment" (Brown, p.298).

Since, as previously mentioned, teachers are "at the heart of language policy" (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p.417); it is important to "recognize teachers as language planners who need explicit instruction around language planning in the pre-service period" (Throop, 2007, p.50).

That being the case, here falls the relevance of this topic for all educators; overall, it is crucial for teachers to be instructed about Language Planning and Policy to be aware of the reason behind the formulation and implementation of language policies, as well as, how policies influence and shape their classrooms, and to reflect on their own contribution on this matter, all of these in order to "to reconceptualize their professional identities, adding the dimension of policy makers"

(Throop, 2007, p.54) and to help their students learn more effectively while simultaneously achieve the goals of their schools' education programs. Hence, to help teachers better understand their professional roles in the classroom, Language Planning and Policy should be incorporated in the teacher preparation process.

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