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## DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICY STUDIES IN SOUTH- EASTERN COUNTRIES

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### Abstract:

Discussion on Language Planning and Policy (LPP) area has evolved over time with focus on orthographic and codification in 1960s, language problems for nation development in 1970s, frameworks and contrasting theories in 1980s and critical viewpoints in 1990s up to now. Following the development, two main approaches of LPP have gained interest of researchers. They are traditional/neo-classical approach and critical approach. It is interesting to see whether the former or the latter is adopted in researching the LPP in south-eastern countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Philippines which encounter issues of language prominence between English and indigenous languages. This study aims to examine approaches taken by researchers in studying LPP, looking closely on specific keywords used in the study abstracts. Methodically, this study applies content analysis on a few journals article abstracts (from 2017 to 2021) on LPP studies in the five countries. It was found that the critical model approach is more opted in the selected articles. The adoption of it may reveal relationship between power and language and the importance of preserving mother tongue and language rights. The study enables recognition of the differences between the two approaches, consequently paving way of looking at LPP from different angles. It may also spark some ideas for future studies in LPP and enhance discussions on the area.

**Keywords:**

Content Analysis, Critical Approach, Language Planning And Policy, Traditional/Neo-Classical Approach

**Introduction**

Language planning and policy (henceforth, LPP) in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines emphasizes the significant role of English in today's globalized world. In Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, it has been institutionalized as either a second language or foreign language which is used widely in education, business and international communication, while in Singapore and the Philippines it has been made an official language. For both functions of the language, English has become increasingly demanding where opportunities to be educationally developed, socially acceptable and economically successful are depending on the proficiency and mastery of the language (Low & Ao, 2018). Policymakers in these south-eastern countries implemented English to be used in education, either as a medium of instruction (Singapore and Philippines) or as a subject in schools and universities (Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand). Simultaneously, more and more English-related job opportunities are provided and people thus, either forcibly or voluntarily spend time, money and effort to be good in the language for life survival. This, however, has burdened certain quarters who do not have many privileges and capacity to be good in the language. Excessive prominence of the English language in language policy is regarded by some as a form of injustice because it hampers language rights and multilingualism considerations.

The emphasis on English in the language policy of these countries has led to certain issues. In the Philippines for example, the Filipino and English languages are promoted, however, this only benefits 30% of the population who speak the language (Young & Igalinos, 2019). When English and Filipino become more extensively used, the identities, language and social practices of more than 180 minorities are diminished. Young and Igalinos (2019) state that this led to social and economic disparities, as individuals who do not speak Filipino have fewer opportunities to engage in public life, obtain higher education, influence political decisions, and take advantage of economic opportunities. Indonesia also has an issue with giving prominence to the English language as there are more than 400 ethnic groups with major native languages like Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Minangkabau and Balinese (Zein, 2019). It is a huge problem to offer English in a way that aligns with the Indonesian people's religious and societal beliefs in terms of character development (Zein, Sukyadi, Hamied, & Lengkanawati, 2020). Malaysia, on the other hand, seems receptive to the status of English as the second language in the country, however, making it a medium of instruction in even just 2 subjects (Science and Mathematics) in schools has caused an uproar among its multi-ethnic population. This has made the government change its approach by making English at par with the National language (Malay language) in schools' dual-language program. Unlike Malaysia, Singapore is devoid of any anti-English slogans and demonstrations in its multilingual and multicultural society. However, the strengthening of English status in the country has gradually undermined the position of indigenous languages like non-standard Chinese dialects, Hindi and Malayalam (Low & Ao, 2018). The debate also occurs in Thailand over the increasing prominence given to English as a foreign language although it is important for the economy and international communication (Low & Ao, 2018).

The current language policy issues in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines need to be approached wisely. Following the development of the LPP field from the 1960s up to now, there are two main approaches to LPP which have gained the interest of researchers. They are the traditional/neo-classical approach and critical approach. The former focuses on layers and processes of LPP while the latter investigates power, ideology and competing for interest behind a policy formulation. Tollefson (1991), an advocate of the critical approach stressed that language policy must be interpreted within a framework that examines socio-political drives to understand its impact on the organization and function of society. This may involve the fate of the indigenous language in an era where English is highly used. It is the interest of this study to see whether selected studies done on LPP are more towards the neo-classical approach or the critical approach as the latter should have more opted as clashes happen between giving prominence to the role of English and the need of upholding the status of indigenous languages LPP in the five south-eastern countries.

### Literature Review

Historically, the field of language planning and policy was first discussed by Haugen in 1959. He emphasized on the importance of orthographic, grammatical and lexical codification in language planning. In the 1960s to 1970s, scholars in the field discussed on the language problems of development nations, the question on whether language can be planned and the language planning process. Moreover, in the next ten decades (1970s until 1980s), the LPP field witnessed the emergence of theories of LPP frameworks like Haugen LPP fourfold model, Cobarrubias ethical issues in status planning and Rubin rational model of planning (Hornberger, 2006). Meanwhile, from 1990s onwards there has been a growing concern towards a critically and theoretically-informed LPP viewpoints. At this phase, new critical approaches towards LPP like linguistic imperialism, planning for equality and governmentality in LPP were developed. Scholars at this stage, advocate relationships between language policies and ideologies (Hornberger, 2006).

Based on the theories and development of the LPP field, a framework that discusses the LPP process was developed. Known as the “Integrative LPP framework” (Hornberger, 1994), it consists of two main areas which are LPP types and LPP approaches. The three types of LPP are status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. They deal with language functions, language structures and language users respectively. Meanwhile, the approaches that can be undertaken to realize the processes include policy planning approach (on how to standardize the language in the society) and cultivation planning approach (on language function and how to implement it).

In each type of the LPP, planning agents, levels and processes are connected to each other. They permeate and interact with each other in various ways and degrees (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The layers of planning and policy is known as LPP Onion Metaphor. The outer layer of the “onion” refers to the broad language policy objectives expressed in legislations at nationwide level, which may then be operationalized in guidelines and procedures. The next layer consists of institutional settings, which are composed of various situated contexts for example; schools, businesses, government offices or media. These institutions work as LPP policymakers, regulators, opinion leaders or gatekeepers. They are responsible to ensure that the language policy is following prescribed standard and procedures. At the heart of language policy (the centre of the onion) is the core layer. It refers to people who play a key role in the implementation of language policies, language classroom

practitioners. Teachers are actually primary language policy makers or “catalysts for policy making” (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 418) in order for the policies to succeed. Studies which focus on these LPP layers are following a traditional/neo-classical approach.

However, discussions on LPP are not only confined to the agents and process of it. According to Ricento (2006), studies on language policy should encompass other related areas like politics, economy and social theory which enable LPP scholars to get more insights on particular policies or approaches. Ricento (2006) further proposed that LPP research must be multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary whereby scholars need to integrate conceptual and methodological tools from different disciplines to solve language problems in the society. On this basis, Tollefson (1991) suggests that a critical approach to LPP is adopted.

The word critical in a critical approach to language policy is defined by Tollefson (2006) as works that critically oppose traditional approaches to language policy research that brings about social change and one which is influenced by critical theory. According to Tollefson (2006) the traditional/neoclassical approach to language policy research ideally assume that communicative problems in a multilingual setting can be easily solved but in fact, there exist many forms of social inequality because policy-makers often promote the interests of dominant social groups. Tollefson (1991) sees that inequality prevails in many countries where there are influxes of minorities with diverse linguistic and cultural diversity. These countries do not promote language-in-education policy which allows the minorities to access social and political institutions. In his book entitled “Planning Language, Planning Inequality” (1991), Tollefson proposed a conceptual framework for his critical approach to language policy. It is called “Historical- Structural Approach to Language Policy”. Tollefson’s historical-structural approach is different from the neo-classical approach in four ways; the level of analysis, the role of history, the criteria used for evaluation and the role of social scientists. Tollefson (1991) believes that research in LPP should look into elements of ideology, power and social structure.

Concerning the traditional/neo-classical approach and the critical approach, LPP studies are based on the former concerns with, the types of policy, the role of policy agents, the level of policy implementation, etc. Meanwhile, for the critical model approach, LPP analysts undertake this approach are very interested to see how language is positioned in a setting and political move that may be carried out to accommodate certain group interests. Researchers may adopt the sociological framework of Foucault (1991) and Bourdieu (1977), critical and postcolonial theory where the analysis of LPP began to take on a more politicised tone. Studies that take this method, would also normally talk about the importance of languages, issues on multiculturalism and multilingualism, language rights, impact of certain language planning and policy on unity and nation-building. According to Tollefson (2015), critical approach features may exist in all the planning processes at all levels. He formulated a framework that explains the concept. (Refer Table 1).

**Table 1: Descriptive Historical- Structural Research Framework**

|                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Status planning      | History of colonialism, Linguistic imperialism, Linguistic stratification in the job market, The role of language in elite closure, Language and national identity                                                                                                       |
| Corpus planning      | Standardization and “accountability” in education, Movements for authenticity and cultural identity, Ethnolinguistic nationalism                                                                                                                                         |
| Acquisition planning | Maintenance of colonial educational systems in post-colonial states, Availability of resources and influence of funding sources for textbooks, materials and teacher training, Globalization and English language policy, Discourse on the instrumental value of English |

Source: (Tollefson, 2015)

As both approaches have been adopted to guide studies in LPP in many parts of the world, this study is carried out to preliminary see the utilisation of the two in the Asian region. The aim of this study is thus, to examine the different approaches of LPP used by researchers in five South-eastern countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines). To do that, themes and patterns used in selected journal abstracts are analysed through content analysis.

### Methodology

In this cross-sectional study, content analysis method was applied to examine 25 abstracts of journal articles (from 2017- 2021) and identify the patterns and trends in LPP studies in five different South-eastern countries (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines). It is a viable method as content analysis enables researchers to construct objective inferences of a phenomenon (Bengtsson, 2016) from written documents (Singh, Yusuf & Hoon, 2020). The content of the abstracts is analysed by separating them into conceptual chunks. This allows for determining the usage of words, themes or any concepts in qualitative data (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). The abstracts were systematically coded and categorized to explore a large amount of textual information to determine trends and patterns of word usage.

Journal abstracts appearing in the mainstream of LPP literature are randomly selected and analysed concerning the studies done by the researchers on the LPP process or issues. The journal abstracts titles analysed include among others; “Language And Nationalism In Malaysia: A Language Policy Perspective” (Kaur & Shapii, 2018), “Multilingualism And Mobility As Collateral Results Of Hegemonic Language Policy” (Albury, 2020), “A New Language Policy For Indonesia” (Saputra & Saputra, 2020), “Language-In-Education Policy On Primary Efl: The Case Of Indonesia” (Zein, 2017), “Language Policy And Bilingual Education In Thailand: Reconciling The Past, Anticipating The Future” (Huebner, 2019), “Translanguaging and Language Policy in Thai Higher Education Emi Programs” (Ra & Baker, 2021), “Teacher Sociolinguistic Backgrounds: A Multilinguistic Domain Approach To Understand Teacher Agency And Language Planning Outcomes” (Lee, 2020), “English In Singapore: Striking A New Balance For Future-Readiness” (Low & Pakir, 2018), “Language-

In-Education Policies And Stakeholders' Perception Of The Current Mtb-Mle Policy In An Asian Country (Adriano, Franco & Estrella, 2021), and “Education, Language Policy and Language Use in The Philippines” (Symaco, 2017).

## Results and Discussion

Through analysis of the content of the selected journal abstracts on LPP studies, it was found that most of the abstracts are adopting the critical approach rather than the traditional/neo-classical approach. The usage of the keywords in each abstract illustrates the type of approach adopted in the LPP studies. Discussion of the findings is explained based on each approach.

### *Neo-classical/Traditional Approach*

It was found that 9 out of the total number of abstracts analysed adopted the neo-classical/traditional approach. The approach is characterized by the investigations of the outer and core layers of the LPP Onion Metaphor (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). For the outer layer, topics ranged from multilingual education (Reyes, 2021; Adriano, Franco & Estrella, 2021), national language program (Bullah & Yunus, 2019; Lee, 2020; Zheng & Mei, 2021; Aziz, Ab Rashid & Zainudin, 2018) to special/foreign language program (Arin & Suwanarak, 2019; Zein, 2017; Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020).

Meanwhile, for the core-level, focuses are given on teachers' perception (Bullah & Yunus, 2019; Lee, 2020; Adriano et al. 2021; Reyes, 2021), resources/facilities/instructional aspects (Bullah & Yunus, 2019; Zein, 2017; Zheng & Mei, 2021; Reyes, 2021), learners' issues/ culture/ attitude/ basic knowledge/ skills/ students' literacy (Solikhah & Budiharso, 2020; Reyes, 2021; Adriano et al., 2021) and social actors (Arin & Suwanarak, 2019; Zheng & Mei, 2021; Adriano et al., 2021).

### *Critical Approach*

From the data of the study, 16 journal abstracts are identified as discussing the critical aspects of LPP. The researchers aimed at looking at issues on globalization, colonial language, multilingualism, etc. (Refer Table 2).

**Table 2: List of Keywords for Critical Approach**

| Countries | Keywords/ Researchers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Malaysia  | Nationalism/individual and group identity/common identity/nation-building/ socio-economic equality/unification/multi-ethnic and multi-lingual populace/official language/medium of instruction/globalization and modernization/post-independence (Kaur & Shapii, 2018). |
|           | Newly independent polity/ multi-ethnic country/ national identity/ sociolinguistic situation/ minority linguistic rights/ dominant ethnic group/ national language/ colonial language/ indigenous languages (Habuan, 2018).                                             |
|           | Ethnonationalism/ethnic difference/Malay ethnonationalism/critical language policy/posthumanism/empowering non-Malay linguistic and socioeconomic mobility (Albury, 2020).                                                                                              |
|           | Language learning/foreign language/international communication/medium of intellectual/ social actualization/ competencies/ international publication/ context self-development (Kharis, Samsul, Mintowati & Ahmadi, 2020).                                              |

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Indonesia   | Linguistic make-up/ history of languages/ critical discussion/relevant languages/ different languages/ future status/ roles each language (Hamied & Musthafa, 2019).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|             | Multicultural ethnic groups/ vernacular languages/diversity/modification/ new form/ unity/nations/ethnic culture/ nationalism/ global world (Saputra & Saputra, 2020).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Thailand    | Monolingual country/vast linguistic diversity/history of migration/ cultural context and annexation/linguistic resources/centrifugal force of globalization/centripetal force of economic/political unrest/sociopolitical typology/two minority language situations/ education reforms (Huebner, 2019).                                                                                                                                                    |
|             | Repression of multilingualism/ top-down agendas/ linguistic landscape and language policy/multilingual spaces/interaction between language policy and public signage (Savski, 2021).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|             | Long history of peoples and their languages/vibrant cultures/ peripheral areas/ non-Tai minorities/ minority language teaching/ traditional communities (Draper, 2019).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|             | Internalization strategies/ Thai language education policies/ Anglophone/ multi lingual landscape and translanguaging practices/ multilingualism/ English Language policies/ translanguaging and EFL theory/ language ideologies (Ra & Baker, 2021)                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Singapore   | Linguistic landscape,English imperialism,/dominance/dual identity/multilingualism (Tang, 2020)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|             | Language policy/heterogeneous Indians/language valuations ( <a href="#">Jain</a> & <a href="#">Wee</a> , 2018)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|             | Bilingualism,/Singaporean English/history of English in Singapore/ language policy/ linguistic norms of language maintenance and shift/ identity and the transmission of values/ equity and meritocracy ( <a href="#">Low</a> & <a href="#">Pakir</a> , 2018)                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Philippines | Multilingual and linguistically diverse context of use/ monolingual perspectives and approaches in ELT/ language variation/ the existence of varieties of English/ translanguaging practices/ categorizations on ELT (Espino, Gonzales & Martin, 2021)                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|             | Critical language studies/ historical and social grounding/ colonial framings of language teaching and learning/ local agency/ foreign, decolonial approaches/ decoloniality movement/ global linguistic hierarchies/ alternative foreign language teaching approaches and materials/ Philippines' sociolinguistic and historical features/ intercultural reflection/ neoliberal educational setting (Cabling, Bautista, Sarmiento, Cruz, & Melchor, 2020) |
|             | Internationalisation/globalisation/ knowledge-based economy/ inclusive and locally- oriented mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)/ the dynamics of language/ explicit and implicit declarations in language policy and use/access to the labour market (Symaco, 2017)                                                                                                                                                                      |

It can be seen that the studies on the neo-classical approach are looking at the bottom-up and the bottom-down within the LPP status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Results of the keywords found for the LPP studies that adopted critical approach also relate to

Tollefson's characteristics of the three different types of planning processes in his historical-structural approach framework (2015). The advantage of applying a critical approach in LPP studies is that critical issues like language rights and linguistic diversity which are parts of cultural artefacts of minority and native ethnic groups can be highlighted. In addition, it is beneficial in showing how economic and political interests have a great influence on language policy formulation.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, LPP is concerned not only with explicit and implicit policies on what, when, how, and by whom, languages are spoken in a country, but also with the values and rights associated with the languages. Some researchers focus on understanding the development of top-down and bottom-up language policies, and also the implementation and impact of it at local, regional, and national levels. In other words, the study in LPP looks at how language policies are formed, implemented, and sometimes resisted. On the other hand, non-linguistic issues also often play a critical role in LPP. Its analysis can be carried out in a broader social, political, and linguistic environment. This study examined selected journal abstracts on LPP in five different south-eastern countries. According to the findings, the critical approach becomes the choice of researchers for the past five years to examine LPP in Malaysia Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines. This shows that the concerns of the LPP field are moving towards realizing the importance of studying LPP from a historical perspective, involving both past decisions and present language planning policies.

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