1 Introduction

Why Language Policy in Action?

1.1 New Challenges for an Established Field

Instances are few and far between in which one embarks upon the writing of a scholarly book to establish a genuinely new field, liberated of the need to carve out a niche in an already existing array of literature. This book certainly does not have that liberty. Language policy (LP) is an established field of research with a relatively settled identity, its own 'big names', its own 'big ideas' and even its own foundation narratives. The core history, drawn by Ricento (2000) and later updated by Johnson and Ricento (2013), traces the field back to the mid 1960s, when linguists like Joshua Fishman, Heinz Kloss, Einar Haugen and Bjorn Jernudd engaged in developing models to address the language issues of newly independent former colonies. From a somewhat less Anglo-centric perspective, these events are predated by an extensive history of language planning efforts by linguists of various nationalities, largely in parallel with the spread of nationalism. Notably, one of the early achievements of the Prague School in linguistics was to develop a model of language cultivation, intended to engineer the elaboration of a spoken vernacular to the prestigious role of 'national language' through expert intervention (Daneš, 2006). As Ricento (2000) finds, this interest in *creating* modernity in early language policy was later rather left by the wayside, with scholarship growing increasingly wary of the negative impact of modernisation projects like those proposed by earlier work. This took place with the emergence of scholarship conscious of the power struggles around any intervention in language, such as Shohamy's (2006) focus on hidden agendas, Tollefson's (1991) examination of how language policy contributes to perpetuating inequalities, Lo Bianco's (1989) work on designing inclusive language policy, as well as Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) conceptualisation of how ELT professionals are positioned by language policy. Further questioning has taken place with a deepening of the critical turn, which has on the one hand led to more detailed studies of the role of individual practitioners and the contexts they occupy in the doing of language policy (e.g. Hult & Källkvist, 2016; Johnson, 2013a, b;

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Pérez-Milans, 2013), and on the other hand greater attention to the consequences of language policy (e.g. Cushing, 2020; De Costa et al., 2019).

The challenges faced by language policy scholarship in the twenty-first century make further distancing from the roots of the field virtually unavoidable, since so many of the cornerstones of historic frameworks have become weakened in both a practical and theoretical sense. The almost exclusive orientation of early scholarship toward the nation-state, for instance, has been loosened in various directions. The movement of the field toward greater empiricism, particularly through reliance on the analysis of ethnographic and textual data, has made it clear that language policy is not a technocratic top-down intervention in practice, but a complex, multi-layered phenomenon in which a variety of power struggles can occur in a wide array of social spaces (ranging from a formal parliamentary session, a quick meeting in a corridor, a snippet of teacher–student interaction in a classroom, or speech and writing in everyday situations on social media or over breakfast). Work on how decisions about language are made in informal groups like families (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023) has made it clear that the complexity found there is of no less interest than in social structures with a more explicit hierarchy, like governments or businesses. A growing awareness of the intensity of global flows of culture, people, products and resources (e.g. Pennycook, 2006) has made it similarly difficult to sustain a focus on the authority of the nation-state, since it is now so often the fact that national governments make language decisions with reference to global discourses about language, or to language policies of international organisations. The spread of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), examined further in Chapter 6, is a particularly notable case in point, since it is a text which has in many contexts come to be seen as representing a higher level of authority when compared to the language policies of national governments.

Further challenges have emerged through developments in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, two fields with which language policy research shares much of its identity and theoretical or methodological apparatus. Scholarship in these fields has in recent decades started to question key axioms of modernist linguistics, particularly the presupposed existence of 'named languages' like English, Slovene or Thai as discrete, static systems independent of human action (see e.g. Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). The rapid rise to scholarly dominance of translanguaging and other conceptualisations which, in their most radical form, reject the existence of linguistic boundaries as anything other than political constructs (e.g. Otheguy et al., 2015), is illustrative of the power of this project to capture global attention. A parallel trend has seen increased theoretical and methodological efforts to decentre language from analytical attention, and instead consider it alongside other meaning-making resources, like space, sound, taste and smell (see e.g. Kallen, 2023;

Pappenhagen et al., 2017; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Yet, in parallel with such efforts at deconstruction, we have also seen increased pressure for the enforcement of traditional, modernist boundaries in the 'real world' outside academia. The election of the boundary-obsessed Donald Trump to the US presidency in 2016, the rather idealistic rebuilding of borders embarked upon by the UK after the Brexit referendum in the same year, the rising global tensions around migration during the war in Syria, the rapid if temporary return to the times of closed borders during the Covid-19 pandemic and the revival of the Iron Curtain after Russia's attack on Ukraine are all reminders that a complete dismissal of borders is somewhat problematic.

More drastically, the resurgence of totalitarian rule, particularly in the form of increasingly common 'hybrid democracies', in which ever clearer boundaries are being set on *what* may be said, not only *how* (i.e. in what language), is a phenomenon which socially conscious research on language would be unwise to ignore. Language policy has traditionally maintained a rather narrow focus on phenomena related to 'languages' as imagined systems, focussing on how societies choose to use particular systems, or parts thereof, and not use others. In doing so, the field has engaged in particular with the way identities are policed; for instance how nationhood is established through the creation and promotion of a 'national language' (e.g. Wright, 2016). While such a focus continues to be relevant, it appears increasingly reductive at a time when our everyday meaning-making practices are increasingly subject to surveillance, and how the existence of such surveillance is being made more and more visible to us when we enter particular physical spaces (Jones, 2017). The potential for surveillance in digital spaces (Jones, 2020) is also of great significance when one not only takes into account the growing prominence of digital communication in our everyday lives but also its centrality in contemporary political discourse, where the ability to exert control over what voices are heard online and what visibility they attain can be decisive in shaping public opinion. Such control goes far beyond the mere management of 'languages', since what is at stake is the dominance or marginalisation of belief systems, ways of experiencing the world and, with them, the legitimation of political-economic structures.

This book argues that there is a need to reconceptualise language policy to fully address all these arising challenges. A key aim of the book is thus to present a unified framework which language policy scholars, whether seasoned or up-and-coming, can use when examining particular phenomena. The core of this framework is its broadening and integration of the *what* and the *how* in language policy. That is, the book seeks to concurrently examine *what language policies do* (i.e. their role in regulating social practices of language use) as well as *how language policies are done* (i.e. their own existence as a specific

set of social practices). These two intertwined dimensions are discussed further in the following sections.

1.2   Decentring 'Language' in Language Policy

A significant challenge for conceptualising *what language policies do* is to try and unsettle the hitherto unquestioned centrality of language (as imagined autonomous system) and of 'named languages' (as imagined bordered entities). This challenge is notable because, as indicated above, language policy as a field can trace its history to a time when the structural conceptualisation of language as system was dominant and moreover was in many cases also directly involved in the construction of 'named languages'. Ideologically, the field thus owes part of its identity to the ethnic nationalism of nineteenth- to twentieth-century Europe (examined in detail in his work on imagined communities by Anderson, 2006), in which language was positioned as a central – if not *the* central – tenet of collective identity. Indeed, while national mythopoesis almost always revolves around historical narratives of common extraction and imaginaries of shared cultural traits, the most immediate, perceptible means of collective identification is a sense of a shared language, or lack thereof. Thus, on the basis of language, 'Slovenes' living in Italy are seen to belong to the same community as those in Slovenia, Hungary, Austria, Argentina or elsewhere, regardless of the many differences between their cultural and linguistic repertoires, their participation in different cultural spheres, and (in many cases) even a lack of shared citizenship. This essentialisation of language vis-à-vis collective identity, while often associated with extreme political phenomena like Nazism or Fascism, in which the mother tongue was deified with the aid of convinced academic followers (Hutton, 2012), has in fact retained a significant influence on much mainstream thought on language, including in language policy scholarship.

This link between conceptualisations of language and the legacy of nationalism has seen increasing scrutiny over the last decade, with the emergence of approaches which seek to challenge in theory and in practice the notion of 'named languages'. While several terms have appeared in the literature, including polylanguaging, metrolingualism and plurilingualism, the concept which has, for good or for worse, had the largest scholarly impact is translanguaging. In its most radical form (see for instance Otheguy et al., 2015), translanguaging scholarship dismisses the existence of 'named languages' (like English, Chinese or Malay), seeing them as ideological constructs, rooted not in linguistic logic but in the need to lend legitimacy to independent nation-states by marking them as communities of mutual understanding (e.g. Slovenia as a state legitimated as a consolidated speech community). Though this model is particularly closely associated with European

nationalism, it became the default mode of legitimating statehood across the globe during the twentieth century, aided in large part by the lasting effects of colonialism (Flores, 2013). Writing particularly with the highly politicised ecology of US bilingual education in mind, translanguaging literature has argued for a departure from the one-nation-one-language formula, instead calling for pedagogical practice which allows minoritised students to employ their full linguistic repertoire 'without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages' (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 283). While a discussion of the psycholinguistic viability of such arguments (see MacSwan, 2017) or the scholarly benefits of the rhetoric behind it (Jaspers, 2018; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2024) are beyond the scope of this book, the view of 'named languages' as sociocultural constructs is highly relevant to language policy. There is much evidence to show how idealised notions of languages as discrete systems legitimated attempts at intervention in language use, either through bans on unwanted ('foreign') lexis or through the planned addition of new ('cultivated') elements. Modern Thai, for instance, reflects conscious efforts at both purifying and extending vocabulary and grammar, purification typically deepening links to Pali and extension often under the influence of European languages (Diller, 1988).

There are various implications of questioning the notion of 'languages' for language policy as a field of inquiry. It is relatively straightforward to accept that linguistic borders reflect past and present political and economic interests, and that pathologising those who do not conform to the ideal of the monolingual user of standard language that underpins these notions is to be challenged whenever possible. More difficult is to do what Shohamy (2006) argued for, namely to move beyond the idea that language policy is merely about language, and instead acknowledge that any attempt to police language necessarily involves issues of identity, ideology and emotion, and that it involves other semiotic modes aside from language. Embracing this means *decentring* language in language policy, by which I mean overcoming the reductive focus on language-as-system and instead considering the complex and diverse variety of semiotic resources used in discourse – among these are visual elements like colour and shape, as well as non-linguistic sounds, taste and smell – in order to examine how policies impact meaning-making practices in a more holistic manner. The signs visible in a public area, for instance, are now acknowledged to be meaningful not merely insofar as the 'language' and other visual features that may be observed on them but as part of the semiotics of the space itself, of the broader social practices situated within it and of the collective and individual memories associated with it (Scollon & Scollon, 2004).

One aim of this book is to argue for a decentring of language by repositioning language policy as the study of discourse management, rather than

language management (a term used in different ways by, among others, Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987; Spolsky, 2004; 2009). By language policy, I thus refer to actions that are *directly oriented to, or otherwise shape, the exercise of authority over the use of semiotic resources in discourse*.[1] In this definition, the semiotic resources in question may involve the use of language, images, music or any other meaningful element – the key is that some attempt is being made to try and exert influence over the way these are used. This exercise of authority may relate to the use of a particular 'named language' like English or Spanish, but it may also involve a level of control over the discussion of a particular topic, the voicing of a particular ideology or the expression of a particular identity. It must thus be underlined that the use of the term 'discourse' in this case does not merely refer to 'language use in context' – referred to as 'little "d" discourse' by Gee (1999) – but rather the much broader role that our range of daily interaction plays in reproducing the society around us – what Gee termed 'Big "D" Discourse'. While it's therefore true that language policy operates in its most banal form by policing what happens in individual interactions, a focus on discourse management implies paying attention to the broader ramifications of such policing on social structure.

Taking these points into account, discourse is thus conceptualised as a continuous interactive flow of semiotic action, transcending different fields and composed of a multiplicity of individual voices and collective ideologies. This understanding draws most heavily on critical discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2015), particularly the discourse-historical approach, whose study of discourse foregrounds long-term shifts around how particular issues are discussed (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015). Thus, discourses as analytical constructs are seen to encompass interaction around a particular macro-topic (e.g. language, migration, the environment, Brexit), with the precise borders set according to the scope of a particular analysis. In whatever ways the borders of 'a discourse' are set, the focus of the conceptualisation outlined above is on capturing the natural diversity of the interaction around a macro-topic. This entails a focus on heteroglossia (plurality of individual voices), polyphony (plurality of collective ideologies) and dialogicality (interaction between voices and ideologies), all terms originally developed by Bakhtin (1981; 1984) and most recently seeing widespread use across applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. In the discourse around Brexit in the UK, for instance, we may identify a range of different individual voices, each articulating a set of individual dispositions (experiences, beliefs, ways of being) and involved with other voices in the co-articulation of collective ideologies. The social actions through which such

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[1] The phrasing of this definition is partly derived from how Jessop (2014, p. 208) defined politics: 'formally instituted, organised or informal practices that are directly oriented to, or otherwise shape, the exercise of state power'.
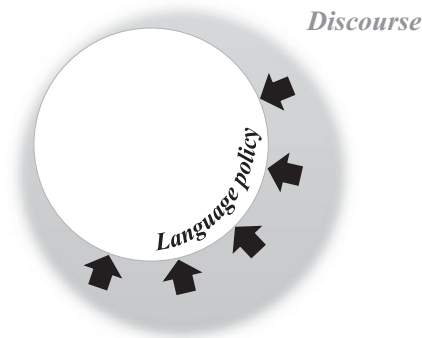
Figure 1.1 Language policy as discourse management

voices are articulated is determined by the structure of particular social spaces, which carry with them expectations regarding who is able to participate and in what way – a politician speaking in the House of Commons is, for instance, provided a very different window of opportunity to participate than a member of the public writing a comment on Facebook.

The primary modus operandi of language policy as discourse management is to construct boundaries in discourse, distinguishing between what is deemed as acceptable and may be expressed, and what is deemed as unacceptable and may not be expressed (see Figure 1.1). These boundaries may be legitimated in different ways and may aim at constraining different types of semiotic practices. In a family setting, for instance, a language policy may involve a ban of certain semiotic elements deemed inappropriate with reference to broader cultural imaginaries, such as swear words or particular gestures. In other cases, a family language policy may involve restrictions on entire topics of conversation (e.g. 'No politics at the dinner table!') or may codify particular interactional practices (e.g. feigning interest in particular topics or activities). Such a language policy may be legitimated through norms of social appropriateness and its role in maintaining interpersonal relationships.

In other contexts, language policy may involve codifying discourse practices with higher goals, such as when sets of 'politically correct' expressions are circulated to consolidate the identity of a political group. As part of a broader crackdown against freedom of the press in Russia in 2022–2023, for instance, a law was imposed which mandated that the government's invasion of Ukraine be referred to as a 'special military operation', thus prohibiting the use of terms like 'war' or 'attack'. Identity is a particularly common warrant for language policy interventions, as it underlies many efforts to exert control over semiotic practices. When governments attempt to regulate what languages

may be visible in the public space, the underlying motivation is generally a concern with which identities may be made visible in discourse and which should be suppressed. This underlines the fundamental connection between language policy and power, which I will return to in Section 1.3.

1.3   Reorienting Language Policy toward Action

Conceptualising *how language policies are done* is hardly a new endeavour, particularly in association with power and inequality. Historically, much research in applied and sociolinguistics has been conscious of the embeddedness of language in unequal relations of power in society, and the role language policies play in upholding those relations. While early work in the 'modernity-building' phase may have approached issues of power somewhat naively by, for instance, avoiding scrutiny of the role language policy often plays in maintaining the power of elites, or even ended up actively reproducing such imbalances (Ricento, 2000), there has been a much more acute focus on the study of inequality over the last three decades of language policy research. Tollefson (1991), in particular, examined the role of language policy in perpetuating ideology, hegemony, exploitation and class inequality, while Shohamy's (2006) work also highlighted numerous issues of oppression and discrimination. These themes have remained central to language policy scholarship until this day, through, for instance, the work of Johnson (2013a, 2013b) on bilingual education in the US, Hult (2012) on language debates in Sweden and others. What the recent turn toward empirical study of language policy has highlighted, however, is the somewhat murky way that the main object of the field, *policy*, has often been conceptualised.

Looking back though the history of the field, the observation can be made that 'language policy' was long conceptualised as, essentially, referring to the linguistic *status quo* in a given society. That is, there has been a tendency to use 'policy' as an uncountable noun in phrases like 'the language policy of the UK', drawing particularly on Spolsky's (2004; see also Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999) tripartite definition of language policy of a community as consisting of: (a) its language management, or attempts to plan use of language(s); (b) its beliefs and ideologies about language(s); and (c) its practices of using language(s). This definition continues to be widely used, being indeed seminal to sub-fields like family language policy (see e.g. Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023), and certainly cannot be accused of missing out key connections – language policies are most certainly closely connected to practices and ideologies. However, its significant weakness is that it turns 'language policy' into a rather large conceptual umbrella which can, without too much creativity, be made to refer to any language-related phenomenon. For instance, while the efforts of a government to impose monolingualism on its population clearly

fall under the scope of policy, so it seems does every single language-related decision by every single individual member of that community – the first would typically fall under 'top-down' and the second under 'bottom-up' policy, in the terminology used by Spolsky (2004). At the same time, there may be 'overt' (explicit, formal) instances of language policy in a community and there may be 'covert' (implicit, informal), with the latter set of terms again seemingly synonymous with practice (Shohamy, 2006). The key issue with such a broad focus is it risks removing the focus from what 'policy' in its essence is about – the exercise of authority in its many forms – and that it backgrounds the way in which authority is 'done' in specific settings.

Such excessively broad conceptualisations of language policy have been challenged by work in the discursive and ethnographic stream of work over the last decade, as research in the field has moved beyond largely theoretical historical-structural writing toward detailed empirical case studies. This focus is particularly evident in scholarship (self-)labelled as discursive (Barakos & Unger, 2016), ethnographic (Johnson, 2009; McCarty, 2010), or (critical) discourse-ethnographic (Johnson, 2011; Wodak & Savski, 2018). Under these labels, two distinct traditions can be identified. The first originated mainly in Europe, developed mainly through investigations of LP issues related to the European Union (EU), and draws its orientation toward action from critical discourse analysis (CDA). Work in this stream has particularly focussed on processes of policymaking, highlighting the complexity of how LPs are negotiated in nation-states and transnational organisations like the EU (Wodak et al., 2012) and how they reflect overall political agendas (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2011). Largely distinct from this CDA-inspired body of work is a more ethnographic stream emerging mainly in the North American context, driven in particular by issues related to bilingual education (Johnson, 2013a) and epistemologically drawing on work in education policy (Levinson et al., 2009) and educational linguistics (Hornberger, 2005). Here, the primary concern has been with the implementation of LPs, particularly with describing the role grass-roots actors have over LPs enacted from above (Johnson & Johnson, 2015), reflecting the complexity inherent in educational systems as large and populations as diverse as those in the US and Canada.

What brings two streams together is a focus on the study of language policy not as status quo but as *action*. In other words, both the ethnographic and discursive traditions have attempted to relativise the macro-political view of policy (as an uncountable noun) in favour of multi-layered empirical study of how specific policies (countable) are done in specific contexts. Levinson et al. (2009) summarise this perspective particularly effectively, stating that it consists of understanding policy 'as a verb' – a complex and dynamic sociocultural process, fraught with tensions and struggles, but also one in which agency and creativity are key. In practice, this has led to the proliferation of research in

which analysis of policy texts is coupled with ethnographic study of specific social spaces in order to ascertain what happens to a particular policy as it travels across contexts. A notable example of such research was Johnson's (2013b) ethnography of bilingual language education policy in an urban school district in the US. Johnson conducted a three-year-long multi-sited ethnographic study which involved conducting projects with teachers and administrators, analysis of standardised testing practices, analysis of language policy texts, participant observation, as well as interviews of the various actors involved. This allowed the study to document, for instance, how individual policy actors were able to exert influence over the policy process: as policy texts were transferred from context to context (e.g. from districts to schools), individuals empowered to do so were able to dictate how the policy should be understood and how it should be implemented.

The conceptualisation of language policy adopted in this book, as *actions that are directly oriented to, or otherwise shape, the exercise of authority over the use of semiotic resources in discourse*, is derived most directly from the discursive and ethnographic traditions. As discussed above, I understand discourse in a dynamic sense, as a stream of semiotic actions which is structured by social practices and which unfolds through time and space (Figure 1.2). Through the unfolding of discourse, a range of potential windows for individuals to engage in language policy-related social actions continuously opens and closes (such windows can be termed 'sites of engagement', following Scollon, 2001), with the dynamics of where and when such windows become available being a highly contextual matter, dependent on the momentary balance of power in a particular setting. In the making of institutional language policy, for instance, a fixed process for 'doing policy' may appear to exist, but often the opportunity of individuals to act within that process is contingent not only upon the legislated structure, but also upon momentary changes in the institutional balance of power (e.g. arrival or departure of particular political appointees) and on individuals' own ability to craft new agentive spaces (e.g. finding ways of circumventing restrictions).
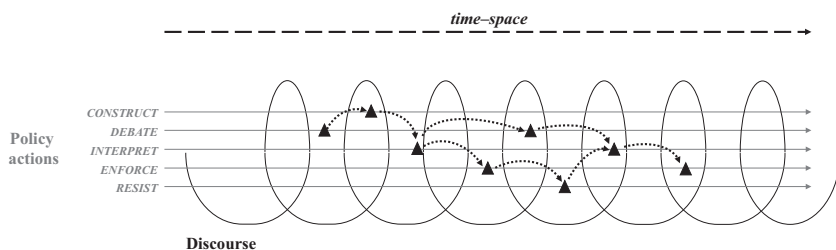

Figure 1.2 Language policy actions

Thus highlights the importance of approaching time-space as a continuum rather than as two separate dimensions, both in a physical, literal sense (discursive actions occur in a particular place at a particular time, against a background of social practices) and from a social perspective (practices are not fixed but continuously evolve).

The focus of language policy as a field is on identifying and studying the particular actions through which attempts to engage in, or shape, discourse management are made. This book is structured around a non-exhaustive set of five key language policy actions:

a) *Constructing* involves the creation and communication of a policy.
b) *Debating* involves polemic discussion about the merits or issues of a policy.
c) *Interpreting* involves reconstructing the meaning of a policy after its creation.
d) *Enforcing* involves mandating that a particular policy be enacted and codifying how this should take place.
e) *Resisting* involves different modes of challenging or subverting an existing policy, interpretation or practice.

These five actions are seen not as a fixed typology, but as a simple heuristic which can enable researchers to deconstruct otherwise complex policy processes. The note must immediately be made that these actions are not completely separate, but often overlap. For instance, it is conceivable that a meeting among policymakers may involve continuous shifting between debating, constructing and interpreting, as a policy text is gradually negotiated into being. Similarly, debating, interpreting, enforcing and resisting may also happen concurrently in the context of an online interaction. These policy actions are therefore not intended to represent a policy cycle of the kind advocated in traditional, positivist policy research in which particular phases were seen to represent a fixed sequence, and any departure from this predetermined pattern was seen as problematic (Jann & Wegrich, 2007). Indeed, the idea of a stable policy cycle seems rather unrealistic, considering the political chaos now routinely observed in many contexts, and such a view of policy is not adopted by this book (cf. Gazzola et al., 2023; see Chapter 3). Instead, a key focus for the book is to make sense of the different settings in which policy actions are performed, considering how such settings are structured by social practices that define *how policy is done*, and how the individuals that enter those settings are able to craft agentive spaces for themselves (and others) to *do policy*. As I discuss in the following section, this necessitates a flexible conceptualisation of power, one that goes beyond the view of power as oppression that has often seemed the default in critical research.

1.4   Adopting a Critical Perspective toward Language, Policy and Action

Though the word may not be present in its title, this book aims to adopt a clear 'critical' perspective on language policy in action. 'Critical' in this context refers to a long line of research, stemming most visibly from scholars of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who saw their goals as transcending the traditional focus on understanding and explaining social phenomena, and has instead aimed also to critically interrogate the background of such phenomena and to transform society as a whole (Tarr, 2017). Such a sensitivity to power and transformative orientation were not entirely new – it had been evident for instance in the work of Karl Marx on the critique of ideology in capitalist economies – though they appeared particularly relevant at a time when Nazism and Fascism were on the rise, and when a global showdown between capitalism and communism appeared inevitable. In response to these challenges, scholars of the Frankfurt School highlighted the need for drawing on a combination of fields, including history, political science, economics, anthropology and sociology, seeing these as resources that can allow both for the critical study of society as a whole and as a basis for the articulation of alternatives. This was a particular concern for Jürgen Habermas, a key name of the Frankfurt School in the post-war period, whose theory of communicative action attempted to formulate a 'rational utopia' for critical scholarship, founded on what Habermas saw as an innate human potential for inclusive deliberation (Habermas, 1984). Though the epistemological bases for critical scholarship may differ, the orientation toward transformation and the articulation of alternatives has continued to be a key feature, most recently through efforts to afford greater visibility to hitherto suppressed identities of, for instance, race and gender.

More specifically, the book builds on the large body of critical research that has built up across the key fields of language studies that language policy ultimately contributes to, most obviously sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Critical sociolinguistics has injected much greater attention to issues of power and inequality into the well-established study of the place of language in society (see e.g. Blommaert, 2010; Heller, 2011; Rampton, 2017), and critical applied linguistics has in recent years asked new questions about how language is conceptualised in scholarship vis-à-vis the numerous different contexts in which it mediates social practice (see e.g. Canagarajah, 2023; García et al., 2021; Henner & Robinson, 2023; Kubota, 2023; Pennycook, 2021). Language policy research has since the 1990s also developed a clear critical orientation, discernible in, among others, the drive of Tollefson (1991) to see the planning of language as ultimately contributing to the planning of inequality, the focus of Shohamy (2006) on investigating the agendas that

underlie practices like language testing, and the engagement of Lo Bianco (2017) in the study of how language can provoke and resolve conflict. What unites these scholars is particular attention to language policy as an exercise of authority in society, in particular when it comes to the way that such authority is used to perpetuate existing imbalances.

The remark can be made here that such work has often tended to emerge in parallel to, but not necessarily in dialogue with, developments elsewhere in language studies during the same period. Aside from continuing the already established critical focus of language policy, an overarching aim of this book is thus also to move toward an integrated critical perspective in which insights from applied linguistics and sociolinguistics play a central role. While work in these fields has to a degree influenced the dynamics of research in language policy, the tendency has continued to be to see language policy research as a field in itself, clearly distinct in focus, culture and membership from its larger cousins. This is problematic for a variety of reasons, most notably because it creates the impression that the study of authority in language is somehow peripheral to the study of language and society. The reality instead is that making sense of how authority is exercised over the role of language in different settings is a key step toward fully accounting for the relationship between language and society, since it allows us to account for how people make language their own by exerting power over its use. As was remarked by an anonymous reviewer of one of the manuscripts that I wrote while preparing this book, there is therefore a need to 'stop seeing the . . . field of [language policy] as an isolated one, and to re-anchor it within a larger problematization of power and control that the rest of the discipline [of language studies] has tackled at least since the early 1980s'.

Achieving such a holistic critical orientation within a framework of language policy in action requires, on the one hand, consideration of the effects of language policy (i.e. *what it does*) and its characteristics as a sociocultural process (i.e. *how it is done*). The traditional form of criticality, oriented toward the demystification of ideology and the unmasking of hidden inequalities, is key to making sense of the first, particularly when one considers the consequences of language policy for people – the selective closure of borders (e.g. to those without a required test score in a particular language), the silencing of voices in the public sphere (e.g. of those whose repertoire does not fit imaginaries of 'appropriateness') and the delegitimisation of identities (e.g. of those who do not fit dominant notions of nationhood). In such cases, there is a clear need for the continued interrogation of how language policy involves the instrumentalisation of language as a means of marginalisation of specific groups of people. Yet, such a conventional critical perspective needs to be relativised when examining the workings of language policy, since while it may result in traditional, one-dimensional imbalances of power being

reinforced, the exercise of power over language is anything but one-dimensional. The doing of language policy involves an array of different actions, occurring in windows where individuals can come to play highly influential roles, and where traditional imbalances of power are just as likely to be challenged as they are to be reinforced. This underlines the need for nuanced critique in language policy, one which while retaining a focus on large-scale structural inequalities is also able to account for the ability of individual actors to achieve small-scale transformation.

1.5   An Overview of the Book

In taking a view of language policy as actions that are *directly oriented to, or otherwise shape, the exercise of authority over the use of semiotic resources in discourse*, this book adopts as its central focus the context-aware, theoretically grounded, data-driven study of how language policies are done and what they do. The book is therefore written with an empirical orientation, aiming to cater to the interests of scholars of language who pursue in-depth research into the practices of particular micro-contexts. Each chapter thus combines discussions of relevant theory with more practical issues of methodology and presents a detailed case study in which theoretical and methodological questions are addressed. The case studies have been selected purposefully to provide a balance between different types of context for policy actions (government, online spaces, traditional media), different cultural and geographical ecologies (Slovenia, Thailand, Singapore) and different language policy issues, ranging from more conventional ones (e.g. planning language education) to those with which the field has traditionally not engaged (e.g. the way public discourse is policed to marginalise specific voices and ideologies).

Chapter 2 begins by engaging further with the question of *what language policy does* by considering what the scope of language policy as a field of inquiry is, beyond the traditional focus on the management of 'named languages'. Starting from the view that language policies are about managing how semiotic resources are deployed in discourse, the chapter asks why this type of discourse management takes place and what form it can take in different contexts. I look at how language policies in educational context involve privileging particular 'ways of being' and managing hierarchies of knowledge and expertise, moving far beyond the mere regulation of 'language' use. In other cases, such as in the regulation of interaction on the flight decks of commercial airliners, language policies are part of a broader process of managing relationships, where they help establish an overall set of values. The association of discourse management with policing values is also relevant to how language is involved in managing participation by controlling what voices are heard in public discourse, not only with regard to what 'languages' may be

used, but also more broadly with regard to what topics may be discussed, what behaviours are to be engaged in and which are to be avoided. All this feeds into what is perhaps the single most visible issue underlying language policies, that of managing access. In general, policies that try to regulate meaning making by creating boundaries in discourse tend to be associated with beliefs about what it means to be a member of a community, particularly with regard to who belongs or does not belong to a national or ethnic community. This serves as a useful reminder that taking a discursive approach also means humanising language policy, acknowledging that attempts at regulating language are not related to language itself, but rather to people, with language most often just a useful proxy.

The book continues with Chapter 3, which draws a context-driven distinction between two key archetypes of *how language policy is done*. The first archetype is institutional language policies, which I describe as characterised by the existence of a universal mandate (non-optional membership) and a pre-existing structure of authority (i.e. a hierarchy which is explicitly legislated). The most clear-cut example of this is modern nation-states, whose power derives from the universal acceptance of the legitimacy of their power to impose measures across a particular geographic area, and from the existence of a set of codified principles by which such power is exercised. In institutions, there is also typically a predetermined time-space structure for policies, dictating where, when and how certain actions are to be carried out, as well as how (i.e. through what textual genre) policies are to be communicated. Aside from states, such patterns can be found in organisations like universities or schools, private businesses, social clubs, churches and others. Many of these properties are significantly different in the second archetype, which I refer to as community language policy. This refers to social structures in which individuals participate in a semi-stable way and which often have a distinct, explicit identity, but in which policies operate in a less predetermined manner. Rather than being legislated, authority to establish and enforce policy is assumed by individuals and is thus open to more negotiation, as is the mandate for any policy to be made in general. Similarly, such contexts are characterised by the absence of regulations regarding how policy is to happen or how it is to be communicated. This archetype includes all examples of policy which do not depend on a pre-existing organisational structure, ranging from large-scale campaigns in public discourse to small-scale groupings like families. As the chapter attempts to make clear, this distinction is drawn to highlight key differences in the ecology of policies, not to imply that all real-life policies fall neatly into one of these categories. Thus, as an analytical heuristic the distinction is conceptualised as a set of interrelated but distinct continua, with various combinations of the two possible in different contexts.

The next five chapters are organised according to the typology of language policy actions described above, with each chapter breaking down a particular action conceptually before presenting a case study. Chapter 4 examines how language policies are *constructed*, focussing most attention on more institutional policies, particularly those created by governments. I discuss the often-peripheral place of language policy on the political agenda, focussing on the practical implications of this for how policies are made. Issues around the writing and ownership of policy texts are also examined, with the case study drawing on data from a detailed historical ethnographic study of policy construction in Slovenia, tracing the trajectory of a language policy text from inception to formal endorsement. In Chapter 5, language policies are examined with reference to how they are *debated* in public discourse. The chapter argues that, like in politics, the space afforded to language policy in conventional media is often narrow, and depends upon how language-related issues invoke broader narratives of identity and ideology, though more significant debating often occurs in new media. The case study examines debates about language policy in Singapore, drawing on examples from traditional media (in the form of letters to the editor) from comments under a Facebook post by a local media outlet.

Chapter 6 studies the way language policies are *interpreted*, with particular reference to the concepts of scale and re-contextualisation. The focus of the chapter is on the relationship between policy meaning and power, with the main argument being that different layers of power are what drives the way language policies are interpreted in different contexts. This is illustrated with a discussion of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), a policy text which has seen worldwide uptake. I examine how the document is 'read' in different contexts, considering the local and global layers of power that lurk underneath these readings.

In Chapter 7, the focus shifts to how language policies are *enforced*, a term which I use instead of the more traditional 'implementation' to highlight the need to focus on action in specific policy contexts and accept the messiness and asymmetry inherent to such a focus. I argue in particular for greater attention to how policies impact the individual by codifying emotional responses and structuring the linguistic habitus. The case study looks at how English language learning is enforced as a moral imperative in Thai mass media through emotive references to the English Proficiency Index published annually by Education First. This sets up Chapter 8, in which the focus is on how language policies are *resisted*. This chapter begins by articulating in a theoretical and practical way what resistance to language policy looks like, particularly from a discursive point of view. It concludes with a case study of resistance to language policy in an online forum for non-local teachers of English in Thailand, highlighting the entanglements between resistance to

limits on what 'named languages' could be used and a broader struggle to overcome a hegemonic racial ideology around the concept of 'native speaker'.

The concluding chapter of the book (Chapter 9) brings together the main threads running through the book in a discussion of what *acting critically* looks like from the perspective of language policy scholarship. It discusses how we as language policy scholars can engage in policy action, not only through scholarship but through advocacy in public discourse and by seeking out opportunities to achieve tangible, practical change.