

Educational Language Policy and the New Latino Diaspora in Iowa

David Cassels Johnson, Crissa Stephens, and Stephanie Lynch
University of Iowa

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Language Policy

A language policy is a policy mechanism that impacts the structure, function, use, or acquisition of language and includes:

- **Official regulations** – often enacted in the form of written documents, intended to effect some change in the form, function, use, or acquisition of language – which can influence economic, political, and educational opportunity;
- **Unofficial, covert, de facto, and implicit mechanisms**, connected to language beliefs and practices, that have regulating power over language use and interaction within communities, workplaces, and schools;
- **Not just products but processes** – “policy” as a verb, not a noun – that are driven by a diversity of language policy agents across multiple layers of policy creation, interpretation, appropriation, and instantiation;
- Policy texts and discourses across multiple contexts and layers of policy activity, which are influenced by the ideologies and discourses unique to that context.

(Johnson, 2013: 9)

Theory

Macro vs. Micro; Structure vs. Agency

- Classic Language Planning
- Critical language policy (Tollefson, 1991, 2012)
- “On-the-ground” approaches (Johnson, 2013; McCarty, 2011)

*Policy as a multi-layered **process** (verb not a noun)*

- Macro, meso, and micro
- Creation, interpretation, appropriation, and instantiation

Policy texts and discourses as heterogeneous and multi-layered

- products of interdiscursivity and intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1986; Kristeva, 1966)
- potentially ambiguous, not reifications of monolithic and static authorial intentions
- Focus on the agency of the language policy actor (i.e. teachers) as active creators, not mere implementers

Method

Discourse Analysis

Focus: Connections between language policy texts, discourses, and practices

- Intertextual and interdiscursive analysis of “texts” (Foucault, 1978; Fairclough, 1992)
- Focus on policy recontextualization (Wodak & Fairclough, 2010)

Language policy in Iowa

- Analysis of policy documents
- State language policies
- Media discourse
- Focus on bilingual education
- Informal interviews with educators and policymakers

ELs in Iowa

Percent EL in Iowa schools

- 1993-1994: 4575 (1 %), most concentrated in particular areas: Des Moines, West Liberty, Sioux City, Ames, and Davenport
- 2003-2004: 15,238 (3.2%), rapid growth in new contexts (Marshalltown increases from less than 2% ELL to 21.6%)
- 2013-2014: 25, 275 (5.0%), rapid growth in new contexts (Denison goes from 0% to 20% to now over 50% ELL)
- **Since 1993, EL population has increased 452%;** Native English speakers increased by .5%

The New Latino Diaspora in Iowa

- Iowa is a part of the *New Latino Diaspora* (Murillo and Villenas, 1997)
- “Instead of arriving in settings , like the Southwest, where Latinos have lived for centuries, those in the New Latino Diaspora arrive in unfamiliar places where long-term residents have little experience with Latinos...[In the NLD] schools...are key sites for the enactment of status hierarchies and other scripts of interethnic interaction.” (Hamann, Wortham, and Murillo Jr., 2001)



Texts

This study:

- Iowa Administrative Code
 - Iowa Law
 - Iowa DOE ELL Policy (official and unofficial)
 - 40 newspaper articles 2000-present
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- Dramatic paucity of language devoted to ELLs in Iowa law and policy

“Limited English Proficient”

- Iowa Code 280.4

Limited English proficient means a student’s language background is in a language other than English, and the student’s proficiency in English is such that the probability of the student’s academic success in an English-only classroom is below that of an academically successful peer with an English language background

- Lau V. Nichols (1974)

[T]here is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.

Program Options

- 2 program options:

Iowa Code 280.4: The medium of instruction in all secular subjects taught in both public and nonpublic schools shall be the English language, except...when the student is limited English proficient...[program options] shall include but need not be limited to **English as a second language (ESL)** or **transitional bilingual instruction** until the students is fully English proficient.

IAC Chapter 60: A program of transitional bilingual instruction may include the participation of students whose native language is not English.

Transitional bilingual instruction includes dual language education?

Space not support

Educating Iowa's ELLs (Iowa DOE Handbook):

Inherent in a school district's obligation to take "appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students (*Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974*, Point F) is the obligation to finance these programs...The primary responsibility for meeting the needs of ELLs lies with the local school district."

- Implementational space (Hornberger, 2002) for a variety of educational programs – including different types of ESL and bilingual education – but no funding tied to successful implementation of a particular model.

Tolerant media environment

- Bilingual education often politically contentious (prop 227, 203), which plays out in the media (E. Johnson, 2005)
- 39/40 newspaper articles “positive”:
 - Intertextual connections to education research showing benefits of bilingual education
 - Highlight awards and academic achievements
 - Quoting local residents who express satisfaction
 - Highlighting academic gains
- 1 “negative”:
 - At a campaign stop 15 miles away from West Liberty, Mitt Romney is quoted as saying he would end bilingual education: "To be successful in America, you have to speak the language of America"

Schools are “on their own”

- Dual language education in West Liberty, Marshalltown, and Sioux City
- Educators report feeling isolated and “on their own”; West Liberty program emerges because of a proactive teacher; convincing the community was a challenge.
 - Principal: “What we’ve learned is stay true to the model...there will always be a group of English speaking parents who want you to water down the program.”
- Challenge of finding qualified teachers
 - IAC Chapter 60: “Teachers in an ESL program must possess a valid Iowa teaching license...[All ESL teachers] must complete the [ESL] endorsement requirements by July 1, 2012...A waiver provision is available for individuals who have been successfully teaching ESL”

What's needed

- Iowa must come to terms
- Updated Iowa language policy with clearer directives for districts and clearer description of roles/responsibilities
- More robust ELL infrastructure across diverse levels of institutional authority
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- IA House Bill 2162/Senate Bill 77 would have increased funding, established an advisory group and committee within the Iowa DOE, and emphasized “research-based instruction”
 - Status: *Introduced-Dead* in the house; *Introduced (passed subcommittee)* in the senate