

Ruiz's (1984) language orientations: An analytical framework for understanding language orientations of macro-micro policy agents

Muhammad Zeeshan¹

Abstract

In light of recent trends/development in language policy and planning (henceforth, LPP), this review paper argues that Ruiz's (1984) language orientations conceptualization can be used as an analytical framework to better understand the possible ideological orientations (language attitudes/ideologies/beliefs) of explicit nature/macro policy actors and conceptual aspects/micro policy agents of LPP development in the given context. In other words, this analytical model could be used as a guide to analyze given LPP contexts, and to examine the attitudes of different key policy actors (i.e., language policy makers, print media journalists, English language teachers, English language students, among other possibilities) towards language(s). Consequently, in light of such analysis/examination, researchers can expose inequalities caused by the language policy of given contexts and, accordingly, may propose an LPP perspective that could foster social justice and equity. This paper also explains Ruiz's concept of orientation and its key elements, i.e., language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource. The language-as-problem orientation considers linguistic diversity as a threat to a given polity. The language-as-right orientation advocates language as a fundamental human right. The language-as-resource orientation opposes the problem-oriented approach as it highlights the benefits of linguistic diversity. I hope this review helps develop understanding regarding Ruiz's language theorization and its justification as an analytical tool to analyze language orientations of macro and micro policy agents of LPP development in a given language policy context in general and in Pakistani context in particular.

Keywords: Language policy; Language orientations; Language-as-problem; Language-as-right; Language-as-resource; Linguistic diversity

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of linguistics and philology, University of Balochistan

1. Introduction

This review paper argues for using Ruiz's (1984) language orientations conceptualization to better understand the ideological orientations (language attitudes/ideologies/beliefs) of explicit nature/macro policy actors and conceptual aspects/micro policy agents of LPP development in the given context. To this end, firstly, this paper presents rationale for using Ruíz's (1984) language orientations as an analytical tool. Next, the notion of language orientation and its key components are explained followed by concluding remarks.

2 Rationale for using Ruíz's (1984) language orientations as an analytical framework

There is a shift from the earlier period of LPP scholarship with the recent development of the field in terms of its focus and underlying orientation of policy development/making. Specifically, the earlier period of LPP scholarship was predominantly conducted through a macro developmental perspective aimed at resolving language issues grounded in linguistic diversity as a problem oriented approach for a given society (Amorós-Negre, 2017; Ruíz, 1984). However, recent development of the field/scholarship suggests that there is a growing recognition regarding micro policy developmental perspective wherein linguistic diversity is considered as an asset in the given polities (Chua & Baldauf, 2011; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Moreover, while in the past the LPP activity was seen as an apolitical activity, the recent trend recognized the ideological nature of LPP development (for details, see, Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2021). In light of these trends/developments, an analytical framework is needed that can lead to a better understanding of the possible ideological orientations (language attitudes/ideologies/beliefs) of explicit nature/macro policy actors and conceptual aspects/micro policy agents of LPP development in the given context.

Ruíz's (1984) 'orientation in language planning' framework can be selected as the analytical lens for a given study because it offers a guide for examining the prevailing language-related issues or orientations—in a given context—and it also helps the analyst to argue for a possible alternative orientation to language policy (Hult & Hornberger, 2016). Learning or understanding the ideological orientations are important

because they mediate/determine the language policy making in society. It is essential to shed light on the question that Ruíz (1984, p. 16) refers to as, “what is thinkable about language[s] in [a given] society?”. The cited quote may entail that policy makers or individual members of the given speech community may reflect positive or negative attitudes (i. e., resource-oriented orientatation or problem-oriented orientatation respectively) towards a given language or languages in a given society which as a result may determine the policy making decision or the role of a given language or languages in a given polity. To put the need for this analytical framework differently, an analytical model is required that could be used as a guide to analyze given LPP contexts, and to examine the attitudes of different key policy actors (i.e., language policy makers, print media journalists, English language teachers, English language students, among other possibilities) towards language(s). Consequently, in light of such analysis/examination, researchers can expose inequalities caused by the language policy of given contexts and, accordingly, may propose an LPP perspective that could foster social justice and equity.

In this regard, scholars have used Ruíz’s (1984) language orientations as an analytical tool in a variety of LPP situations and contexts (Amorós-Negre, 2017; de Jong et al., 2016; Nguyen & Hamid, 2018; Shank Lauwo, 2020; Zéphir, 1997). This framework has been applied to investigate the attitudes prevalent in the given LPP situations and also to understand the attitudes upheld by micro policy agents (i.e., teachers and students). In other words, the framework is useful because it can help illuminate the language orientations of both macro and micro policy actors of a given LPP context. To illustrate, Amorós-Negre (2017) deployed the framework to analyze and critically examine the historical development of Spanish language policy and planning making. This enabled Amorós-Negre (2017) to identify different orientations (language as a problem, right and resource) prevalent in different phases of Spanish language policy and planning contexts. Consequently, she proposes a resource orientation for policy making in the context of the Spanish speaking world. In this regard, she also recommends that ethnographic and critical approaches to LPP are required in Spanish LPP contexts which could help foster plurilingual and pluricultural practices. Similarly, Zéphir (1997) highlights the shortcomings of language-as-problem orientation in the US educational context; hence, by utilizing language-as-right and-resource metaphors, Zéphir (1997) argues for home

language instruction and bilingual educational programmes in Creole and English for monolingual Creole-speaking children in the US. By applying the language-as-resource metaphor in three different international contexts, namely, Taiwan, China and Pakistan, de Jong et al. (2016) report the dynamic nature of the language orientations framework, meaning that within the same context and within the same society different groups position a given language as a resource but on different grounds, or some regard it as a resource and others consider it as a problem (for details, see, de Jong et al., 2016). Their identification of dynamic nature of the framework further necessitates that it may be employed to other contexts to learn whether it works in the same way or differently. Primarily, all these scholars have applied the framework to the explicit nature of LPP processes, meaning that they have utilized the framework to analyze mainly the language policy documents to describe the LPP contexts (Amorós-Negre, 2017; de Jong et al., 2016; Zéphir, 1997). More importantly, in the case of Pakistan, scholars have used the framework to describe the LPP orientations (de Jong et al., 2016). In other words, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, this is the only study which has used the framework to describe LPP context of Pakistan; however, there is still a gap/need to apply the framework to the relevant language policy documents (i.e., the Constitution and educational policy documents).

On the other hand, scholars have employed the framework on the conceptual nature/micro aspects of LPP processes (Nguyen & Hamid, 2018; Shank Lauwo, 2020). More specifically, Nguyen and Hamid (2018) deployed the framework on interview data to examine Vietnamese ethnic minority students' language attitudes towards formal and informal language policies in the domains of school, church, and ethnic community and towards their individual bilingualism. They found that school language policy contributed to shaping the students' first language as a problem while projecting Vietnamese as a resource. In contrast, church and community language policies shaped the language-as-right orientation. Despite such constructions, the participants perceived their bilingualism as a resource. Hence, Nguyen and Hamid (2018) argue that such attitudes could help them maintain their ethnic identities/features and "join the mainstream flow simultaneously" (p. 344). Drawing on the findings, they argue that linguistic diversity, bilingualism, and cultural heterogeneity are a resource rather than a problem in defining/developing language policies for national

development and social inclusion and harmony in Vietnam. Shank Lauwo's (2020) empirical investigation highlighted language-in-education issues in a multilingual context of Tanzania. Specifically, drawing from parental interview data and school observations, Shank Lauwo (2020) reports that Maa (language), culture and community are ideologically constructed as a problem while Kiswahili is embraced and positioned as a resource in the schools in Tanzania. Such contrasting orientations disadvantage the Maa speaking children in the school settings, Shank Lauwo (2020) notes. To address this equity issue, she argues for embracing a language-as-resource orientation wherein multilingual home/mother-tongue-based medium of instruction is considered as an asset rather than a problem. So far as Pakistan is concerned, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, none of the studies have drawn/ applied the framework to analyze or understand English language teachers' or English language learners' language orientations. Therefore, this researcher's PhD work is the first study of its kind in the context of Pakistan which attempts to apply the framework on multiple data sets, including policy documents, print media texts, teachers and students interview data, and hence, the inquiry aspires or argues for language diversity as a resource approach for LPP development for Pakistan. In the following section, the concept of orientation and its key elements are described.

3. The notion of orientation and its key components

Ruíz (1984) defined orientation as "a complex of dispositions towards language and its role and towards languages and their role in society" (p. 16). Moreover, Ruíz (1984) presents a three pronged approach to language orientations, i.e., language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource. The language policy development based on language-as-problem takes linguistic diversity as a problem at both an individual and a national levels in a given polity. Language-as-right considers language as a fundamental human right and, accordingly, minorities' linguistic rights are advanced. Unlike language-as-problem, the language-as-resource perspective takes linguistic diversity as a resource at both at the individual and national level. In the following section, each orientation is elaborated on.

3.1 Language-as-problem orientation

Ruíz (1984) offers a critique on early language planning on the grounds that the activity was predominantly conducted with a language-as-problem orientation. Specifically, Ruíz (1984) highlights the shortcomings of language-as-problem perspective adopted in the US language policy context. The language-as-problem approach involves a set of values which derives from a monolingual ideal and assimilationist school of thought (Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Hornberger, 1990; Evans & Hornberger, 2005). In this perspective, while linguistic diversity is considered as a threat to national integration, selection/adoption of a single common language or dominant majority language is considered as the best way to unite the nation (Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruíz, 1984). Furthermore, lacking competence in the majority dominant language is perceived to be a disadvantage or a deficit (Liu & Gao, 2020). In other words, minority ethnic groups mother tongue/first language or their linguistic/languages repertoires are seen as a problem rather than as an asset (Harrison, 2007; Hult & Hornberger, 2016). More importantly, in such orientation, language issues are linked with social problems (Ruíz, 1984). Ruíz (1984, p. 19) puts it in this way: “language issues becoming linked with the problems associated with this group [non-English speaking Americans] – poverty, handicap, low educational achievement, little or no social mobility”.

Referring to the Bilingual Education Act and state statutes on bilingual education in the US, Ruíz (1984) highlights that such act and statutes were developed on the assumption that “non-English language groups have a handicap to be overcome” to overcome this, “teaching English, even at the expense of first language – became the objective of school programs” (p. 19). To put it differently, the educational programs were/are developed on a language-as-problem orientation drew/draw on subtractive language teaching principles (Hult & Hornberger, 2016). The relevant extracts are presented here to highlight some of the major elements of such orientation (Ruíz, 1984). In short, language policy development that draws on the language-as-problem does not take into consideration the existing linguistic resources of local/indigenous/minority language groups or communities in a given society and hence, educational programs or policies are designed to eradicate such resources (Ruíz, 1984). In other words, language policies which are developed on this stance “aim to limit or entirely eliminate

multilingualism in society in favour of encouraging the development of the dominant majority language” as Hult and Hornberger (2016, p. 34), note.

3.2 Language-as-right orientation

The language-as-right orientation considers language as a basic human right. I present some of the examples of language rights which Ruíz (1984) cites because they provide insight into major types of language rights relating to different domains of a given society including “effective participation in government programs, “[...] use of ethnic language in legal proceedings”[...] the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of language and the right to use [one’s] language(s) in the activities of communal life [...] the right of students to their own language” (p. 22).

Linguistic human rights or language rights can mainly be classified into two different types, namely, negative rights and positive rights. Negative rights forbid discrimination on the basis of language(s) (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). Positive rights tend to “ensure the equal treatment to languages, individuals, or language group” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013, p. 1). Hult and Hornberger (2016) assert that positive rights may be incorporated in the legislation to guarantee that individuals can utilize their languages in domains such as employment, healthcare, education and media of society. However, one may raise concerns that, despite incorporating the rights in the legislation, the extent to which they may in actual practice, or the legislation be further executed/implemented in the given context or society is subject to further scrutiny. Moreover, Hult and Hornberger (2016) also assert that positive rights promote or advance “the status of minority languages by expanding the functions for which they can be used while also ensuring equality of access for their speakers” (p. 35). Negative rights may also be incorporated “in the de jure policies of non-discrimination based on language” Hult and Hornberger (2016, p. 35) suggest. The same concern as raised about positive rights can be applied to negative rights.

Scholars consider educational linguistic human rights, particularly, mother-tongue-based multilingual education, are among the most significant linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2013; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009; Heugh & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2010). In addition to considering mother-tongue-based medium of instruction as beneficial, Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) takes a linguistic human right perspective to argue for mother-tongue-based multilingual education. To illustrate, based on the

assumption that due to the non-availability of mother tongue/first language-based instruction, most often minorities children are not enrolled in the education in the given society; therefore, Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) asserts that denial to provide education to children in their mother tongue/first language is a violation of the human right to education. One may argue that in addition to non-availability of mother-tongue-based instruction, there might be several other factors which have hindered or might hinder minority children's enrollment in the schools in the given context. Moreover, Skutnabb-Kangas (2013) asserts that individuals may also have rights with the regard to languages other than their mother tongue/first language. Most often these rights relate to the dominant, official, or national language of a given country. In short, specifically, mother-tongue-based multilingual education and equal opportunities to learn an official or a national language can be seen or argued from the language-as-right oriented perspective in a given context.

3.3 Language-as-resource orientation

The language-as-resource orientation opposes the problem-oriented approach as it highlights the benefits of linguistic diversity (Harrison, 2007; Shank Lauwo, 2020; Vuorsola, 2019). Ruíz (1984) argues for a language-as-resource oriented approach to language policy development and hence he cites multiple advantages of this orientation: “[...] it can have a direct impact on enhancing the language status of subordinate languages; it can help to ease tensions between majority and minority communities; it can serve as a more consistent way of viewing the role of non-English languages in U.S society [or the role of non-dominant languages in a given society]; and it highlights the importance of cooperative language planning” (p. 26). In brief, in contrast to the language-as-problem orientation, the resource oriented language policy develops on the assumption that “language is a resource to be managed, developed and conserved would tend to regard language minority communities [or indigenous/local ethnic language groups/communities in a given context] as important sources of expertise” (Ruíz, 1984, p. 28). More importantly, a language-as-resource may have both intrinsic and extrinsic values (Ruiz, 2010). Intrinsic value refers to “cultural reproduction, community relations, inter-generational communication, identity construction, building self-esteem, and intellectual engagement” (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 39). Extrinsic value refers to,

“inter alia, national security, diplomacy, military action, business, media, and public relations” (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 39).

4. Conclusion

In light of some relevant reviewed literature, this paper argued that Ruiz’s (1984) language orientations conceptualization can be employed as an analytical framework to better understand the possible ideological orientations (language attitudes/ideologies/beliefs) of explicit nature/macro policy actors and conceptual aspects/micro policy agents of LPP development in the given context. This paper clearly explained Ruiz’s notion of orientation and its key elements, i.e., language-as-problem, language-as-right and language-as-resource which may help develop understanding regarding the theorization and its justification as an analytical tool to analyze the language orientations of macro and micro policy agents of LPP development in a given language policy context. Specifically, researchers can gather policy documents of a given language policy context in general and Pakistani context in particular and can apply this framework to analyze policy makers’ language orientations. Furthermore, researchers could also identify policy makers’ language orientations and their practices. Put differently, researchers may explore if policy makers’ take linguistic diversity as a resource approach then what practical measures they have taken to support and encourage linguistic diversity in a given context. In this way, researchers can highlight policy and practice mismatch and its subsequent effect on individuals’ orientations towards indigenous languages (Manan, David, & Dumanig, 2017). Such analysis will not only help researchers to propose an LPP orientation that could foster linguistic diversity, social justice and equity but also recommend practical measures to protect and conserve linguistic diversity.

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