

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Florence Bonacina-Pugh (2024). *Language Policy as Practice: Advancing the Empirical Turn in Language Policy Research*.**

**Palgrave Macmillan, Pp. 280.**

**ISBN 978-3-031-55782-8;**

**ISBN 978-3-031-55783-5 (eBook)**

**\$144.40 (Hardcover)**

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**Abstract.** This review explores the theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions of *Language Policy as Practice*, edited by Florence Bonacina-Pugh. The book represents a significant shift in the study of language policy from normative and macrostructural approaches toward empirical ones that foreground language practices in real social contexts. Across eleven diverse chapters, the contributors present ethnographic studies and in-depth interactional analyses of language policy as it unfolds in various domains, including classrooms, higher education institutions, transient communities, and households. The book's central focus is on how language policies are not merely top-down directives but are interpreted, negotiated, and enacted situationally by local actors in their everyday lives. This review appreciates the "language policy as practice" approach advanced in the book while also addressing its conceptual and methodological challenges. By emphasizing a human-centered perspective, the book invites readers to envision a future of language policy that is more inclusive, equitable, and grounded in the lived experiences of its users.

**Keywords:** *language policy, language practices, multilingual education, negotiated policy.*

**Анотація.** Ця рецензія досліджує теоретичний, методологічний та емпіричний внесок книги "Language Policy as Practice", за редакцією Флоренс Бонасіна-П'ю.

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*East European Journal of Psycholinguistics*, 12(1), 325–329. <https://doi.org/10.29038/eejpl.2025.12.1.rit>

Видання становить важливий зсув у дослідженні мовної політики – від нормативних і макроструктурних підходів до емпіричних, які акцентують на мовних практиках у реальних соціальних контекстах. В одинадцяти розділах автори презентують етнографічні дослідження та поглиблений аналіз взаємодії мовної політики в різних сферах, зокрема в класах, закладах вищої освіти, мобільних спільнотах, та в домогосподарствах. Основна увага книги зосереджена на тому, що мовна політика – це не лише директиви згори, а й процеси, які локальні учасники інтерпретують, узгоджують і реалізують ситуативно у своєму повсякденному житті. В рецензії схвально оцінено запропонований у книзі підхід «мовна політика як практика», водночас розглянено його концептуальні та методологічні виклики. Зосереджуючи увагу на людині, книга пропонує читачам уявити майбутнє мовної політики більш інклюзивним, справедливим і заснованим на реальному досвіді її користувачів.

**Ключові слова:** мовна політика, мовні практики, багатомовна освіта, узгоджена політика.

The book *Language Policy as Practice*, edited by Florence Bonacina-Pugh, comprises eleven interconnected chapters that engage readers through their cohesive and compelling narratives. As a powerful introduction, the first two chapters critically and reflectively map out a new direction in contemporary language policy studies. David Cassels Johnson and Florence Bonacina-Pugh, in turn, articulate what they refer to as the Empirical Turn, a paradigmatic shift away from normative and structuralist approaches toward a focus on everyday language practices and individual agency in the creation, negotiation, and enactment of language policy. These chapters not only lay out the theoretical framework that informs the subsequent contributions but also propose the concept of practiced language policy as an analytical lens that bridges formal policy texts, social norms, and actual language practices. Drawing on ethnographic methods, conversation analysis, and transdisciplinary thinking, the authors productively challenge the binary of top-down vs. bottom-up policy perspectives and expand our understanding of language policy as dynamic, situational, and embedded in social interaction.

Chapter 3 deepens the understanding of practiced language policy as a dynamic, contextual, and continuously negotiated social practice. Florence Bonacina-Pugh critiques normative approaches to language policy and offers an alternative framework that emphasizes policy not as a fixed set of rules, but as the outcome of social interaction shaped by domains, participants, and power relations. Drawing on Fishman's domain theory and the principle of reciprocity of perspectives, she argues that language policy is inherently flexible shifting with context, interpreted differently by speakers, and evolving through emergent norms. Using conversation analysis of interactions in multilingual classrooms, Bonacina-Pugh illustrates how conversational repair moments reflect the negotiation of linguistic norms in practice. She offers a

robust theoretical and methodological approach to viewing language policy as a flexible and evolving social process.

Chapter 4 authored by Hao Zhang, makes a significant contribution to expanding our understanding of language policy by shifting the focus from normative and textual approaches to a praxis-oriented perspective rooted in the interactional dynamics of the classroom. Employing conversation analysis of interactions in a Mandarin language class at a Scottish primary school, Zhang demonstrates that language policy is not merely embodied in formal documents or institutional regulations but is better understood as the outcome of continuous social negotiation between teachers and students in the learning context. He reveals that language choice in the classroom is not arbitrary but conditioned by the type of pedagogical activity taking place each bringing its own set of linguistic norms. This approach highlights how shifts in pedagogical framing for instance, from instruction to discussion or drilling, lead to corresponding shifts in the language medium used, thereby presenting language policy as a dynamic, contextual, and multilayered phenomenon.

Chapter 5 presents a significant contribution to language policy studies by emphasizing that policy is not a fixed normative entity, but rather a dynamic social practice negotiated in everyday life. Drawing on the *Second Wave of Southern Perspectives* (SWaSP), Sangeeta Bagga-Gupta examines the languaging practices of users of Swedish and Swedish Sign Language to expose structural inequalities experienced by marginalized groups, such as individuals with sensory disabilities. Through an in/un-disciplinary approach and WPR (What's the Problem Represented to be) analysis, she distinguishes between policy-as-promised and policy-as-practiced, illustrating how language serves as a contested site for identity and accessibility struggles. This chapter not only broadens methodological horizons through multi-scalar and cross-sectoral approaches but also serves as an epistemic intervention, challenging universalist tendencies in language policy scholarship and advocating for solidarity and social justice.

Chapter 6 explores the relationship between formal language policy and actual language practices within a multilingual university in Finland. Solin and Pienimäki examine the use of the institution's three official languages Finnish, Swedish, and English in administrative contexts, particularly in the curriculum documents of a master's degree program. Through ethnographic methods and discourse analysis, the chapter reveals how curriculum texts not only reflect policy but also expose ongoing negotiations, constraints, and habitual practices on the ground. Their study finds that the trilingual policy often functions symbolically, as its implementation is hindered by resource limitations and

coordination challenges. By focusing on curriculum writing practices, Solin and Pienimäki provide fresh insights into the ideological dynamics and practical complexities of language policy implementation at the institutional level.

Chapter 7 offers a significant methodological contribution by extending language policy studies into the multimodal realm through the use of Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (EMCA). By analyzing video recordings of EMI (English Medium Instruction) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms, Jakonen and Duran demonstrate that gestures, facial expressions, and bodily movements play a key role in managing linguistic norms. This approach highlights the body as an integral component of embodied language policy practices. However, the chapter's strong focus on micro-sequential analysis risks overlooking broader ethnographic and political dimensions, potentially reducing the body to a neutral instrument rather than recognizing it as an active ideological site. While Jakonen and Duran open up new understandings of multimodality in language policy, they fall short of fully addressing issues of power and authority in determining language legitimacy within educational institutions.

Chapter 8 written by Rizwan-ul Huq, contributes to language policy scholarship by adopting a Multimodal Analysis approach to investigate interactional practices in two English-medium schools in Bangladesh. Through detailed analysis of classroom video recordings that capture the use of both English and Bengali, Huq reveals how language choice norms are enacted situationally and performatively not only through verbal speech but also through bodily actions and gestures. This approach effectively dissolves the boundaries between formal policy and everyday practice, illustrating how students and teachers strategically employ multimodal resources to shape and negotiate language norms within pedagogical interactions. The chapter's primary contribution lies in its methodological innovation in reconstructing language policy as a locally realized and context-sensitive process. However, despite the richly reflective classroom ethnography, the analysis leaves room for a more critical exploration of the ideological and sociopolitical dimensions framing the role of English in Bangladesh's private education system.

Chapter 9 *Practiced Language Policy in Family Language Policy Research*, emphasizes that language policy within families is not imposed top-down but is dynamically negotiated through everyday practices particularly in interactions between children and caregivers, including parents and the broader environment. Drawing on in-depth ethnographic studies of minority-language-speaking families in Ireland and Scotland, Smith-Christmas illustrates how family language practices reflect collaborative negotiations that

blur the lines between language “management” and “practice,” and are infused with affective and creative meaning. While this chapter significantly enriches Family Language Policy (FLP) perspectives through micro-interactional approaches and robust theoretical reflection, its analysis could be strengthened by further connecting these dynamics to broader structures of power, such as global language hegemony and the social inequalities that shape family language choices.

Chapter 10 highlights that language policy does not always manifest in formalized ways but can emerge organically within transient social configurations, such as workplaces or temporary communities. Using micro-longitudinal video data from two cases a group of interdisciplinary academics at a Danish university and a musical ensemble at a concert venue Mortensen, Hazel, and Brandt demonstrate how norms of language choice gradually take shape through interactions among individuals with no shared history of socialization. Combining Conversation Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, and Linguistic Ethnography, the chapter reveals that language policy practices are not only local but also deeply intertwined with broader language ideologies. This approach enhances our understanding of language policy as a complex social process and invites critical reflection on issues of power and exclusion in multilingual practices. However, the chapter’s dense academic style may pose challenges for non-specialist readers.

Chapter 11 authored by Teresa L. McCarty, offers a reflective conclusion on the direction and values of language policy research, emphasizing the importance of humanistic approaches grounded in real-world practices. McCarty traces the intellectual trajectory of language policy scholarship from the 1990s to the present, asserting that language policy should be understood as a dynamic, contextual social process enacted by individuals in their everyday lives rather than merely as a product of formal documents. She underscores how ethnographic research has opened up space for person-centered approaches that prioritize relationality, empathy, and reciprocal engagement between researchers and participants. By reaffirming language policy as an ongoing practice, McCarty closes the volume with a compelling call to envision a more just and meaningful future for language policy, one shaped by the voices and lived experiences of those most intimately involved.