University of Tehran press

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH
p-ISSN:2588-4123 e-ISSN:2588-7521
https://jflr.ut.ac.ir **Email**:jflr@ut.ac.ir

Comparison between Iran's Policy Documents and Teachers' Actual Beliefs Regarding the Notion of Teacher's Role; Matches and Mismatches

Majid Nemati* ✉ **0009-0007-7536-8271**
Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages & Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran
Email:nematim@ut.ac.ir

Azadeh Rajaei**
Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages & Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran
Email: azadeh.rajaei1979@ut.ac.ir

ABSTRACT
On account of the fact that there might be a conflict between "teachers' roles" as imagined by policy makers and curriculum developers and "values" as preferred by teachers, the present study tries to analyze language teaching policy documents on the one hand and to examine the interviews with the high school teachers on the other hand, in relation to the notion of the teachers' role. This study represents a design which is qualitative in nature and to do so, four national policy documents bearing policy messages for English language education have been investigated as sources of overt national policies. In addition, in order to investigate how teachers interpret and articulate the policy in their classrooms, nine secondary high school classes in different cities of Iran have been observed using ethnographic methods and then the teachers of these classes have also been interviewed. As the next step, the Alignment between teachers' policy interpretations and policy documents messages regarding teachers' roles has been stated. The findings of this study reveal that even though there is a rather considerable consistency between policy documents and teachers' perception of policy, what the teachers actually do in class depends much more on the context's expediency rather than policy expectations.

ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received: 15 August 2022
Received in revised form 02 December 2022
Accepted: 10 December 2022
Available online: Spring 2024

Keywords:
overt policies, covert policies, teachers' role, teachers' policy interpretation, policy application

Nemati, M. , & rajaei, A. (2024). Comparison between Iran's Policy Documents and Teachers' Actual Beliefs Regarding the Notion of Teacher's Role; Matches and Mismatches. *Journal of Foreign Language Research*, 14 (1), 1-14. http//doi.org/ 10.22059/jflr.2022.347097.980.

 Publisher: The University of Tehran Press.
DOI: http//doi.org/ 10.22059/jflr.2022.347097.980.

* Dr. Majid Nemati is an associate professor of Applied linguistics in the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Tehran. His areas of interest are first language acquisition, ESL writing, and broader view of applied linguistics.
** Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages & Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

1. Introduction

Given the high degree of social status conferred on English by Iranian schools and universities, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Iran has paid considerable attention to the role of English in each revision of the National Curriculum since the 1970s in hopes of bolstering Iran's international competitiveness through English competency in academic settings both in and out of the country (Arani et al. 2018). As a result, the curriculum has undergone major changes. In this new climate, it is especially urgent and therefore necessary to investigate the consequences of such ELT policies from different perspectives. Such investigations consist the language policy and planning field (LPP), an academic discipline in which a specialist applies techniques of cost-benefit calculations, to generate compared alternatives for action to recommend to decision makers (Lo Bianco, 2010). In this regard, many scholars aspired to a political scientific approach to LPP by specifying orderly and systematic requirements for LPP such as the establishment of goals, selection of means and prediction of outcomes (Lo Bianco, 2010).

As the field may not have been dialogic enough in Iran, ELT policies in this country as well might be officially developed and announced but may also remain unofficially embraced and practiced without being overtly stated. The point is that, based on the distinction that has been made between overt and covert policies (Nero, 2014; Schiffman, 2006), there may be a gap between these two. In other words, there might be a (mis)match between "needs" as conceived by policy makers and curriculum developers and "wants and values" as preferred by other more immediate stakeholders (e.g. learners and teachers). As a result, top-down policies may not accurately account for the ways that diverse local contexts shape teachers' instructional decisions (Esposito et al. 2012). Teachers' intentions and values also shape their practice but may not reflect policy goals (Kennedy, 2004). Overall, these issues could open a rather new area for research in the Iranian context as to investigate the gaps and probably to suggest some solutions to decrease this gap.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the educational system in Iran is based on Iran's 20-year vision plan. This plan and other policy documents of Iran are the Bible of whole educational system based on which all the educational decisions are made. That is why some studies have been conducted to analyze and understand these documents more attentively (Rasti 1401; Valizadeh 2021; Haghani & Ghodousi Shahneshin 1398; Ebrahimi & Sahragard 2016; Mirhosseini & Khodarahmi 2016; Kiani et al. 1390). The cited articles have mostly investigated possible deficiencies and problems in the documents as well as the way they have been implemented in the country but the concepts of teachers' role and what is considered value in their views have not received enough attention in these studies. That is why the present study tries to provide a specific analysis regarding teachers' role in policy documents. The reason is that since these documents are considered as reference documents for determining the educational policy, it seems necessary to know how and by using what concepts the teachers' role is defined in these documents. It is an essential issue that has not been examined yet. On the other hand, to have a deeper understanding of both the documents and

teachers' perceptions, the words of these two sets of data need to be analyzed and investigated attentively so that an exact comparison would be achievable. Moreover, according to some policy makers the current education policy documents have to be revised in near future, thus expressing the teachers' values, wants, and challenges can be of great help and importance as to make the new ones more effective and more practical as well.

Overall, the present research aims to first do a systematic analysis of the four main policy documents in relation to the accounted and presumed teachers' roles in different aspects of English language education. Next, the results of a similar thematic analysis of interviews with teachers are presented to determine the level of knowledge and perceptions of teachers about educational policies. As the final step, an ethnographic study of the classrooms is presented to investigate what is happening in them.

Literature Review

2.1 Language Policy and Planning

For an expanded view of LPP, Spolsky (2004) proposes a model of language policy that consists of 1) language practices, 2) language beliefs or ideologies, and 3) language management or planning. Examining these three elements together can offer a richer explanation of how a language policy is interpreted and implemented, as well as its consequences. To supplement Spolsky's model of language policy, Shohamy (2006, p. 54) introduces the concept of mechanisms or policy devices that represent overt and covert devices that are used as the means for affecting, creating and perpetuating de facto language policies. (See Figure 1 below for a graphic representation)

Figure 1: Model of Language Policy (adapted from Shohamy, 2006 and Spolsky, 2004)

Language policies in Iran too, are shaped more or less the same as depicted in the Spolsky's model. The first element will be defined in the following sections but regarding the second element it can be stated that English language teaching in Iran has been historically shaped by the official influences of sociocultural and political authorities (Riazi 2005; Borjian 1392). Official education specifically language policies in Iran, probably more than many other countries, are connected to the sociocultural conditions of the country and the political and religious attitudes (Narafshan and Yamini 2011; Mahboudi & Javdani 2012; Mirhosseini & Khodakarami 2016). The third element in the model, which is language planning, can be summarized in Iran's policy documents that have been examined in different ways. In some studies they have been compared with the curriculum (Kiani et al., 1390), in some other papers the elements of national identity were investigated in the documents (Valizadeh, 2021), and some other researchers explored the relationship between policy and The Academy of Persian Language and Literature (Rasti, 1401). In almost all of the mentioned studies a kind of mismatch or lack of

conformity has been reported. In other cases, only the documents themselves have been examined and analyzed, and in the end, they have been introduced without a theoretical basis and a specific implementation plan (Haghani & Ghodousi Shahneshin, 1398).

1.2 ***Teachers and Policy-classroom gap***

The first element in Spolsky's model deals with the ways in which language is used and practiced, which is explained here in relation to the role of teachers. Researchers have frequently explained that there are discrepancies between teachers' responses to policy and policy makers' intentions as the result of a lack of clear or explicit explanations for policy requirements (Grant et al., 2002; Greenfield et al., 2010). However, it is possible that teachers' responses do not reflect policy makers' intentions because of a flaw or limitation in the policy rather than teachers' intentional disregard for policy requirements (Grant et al., 2002; Hajisoteriou, 2013). In general, each of these studies seemed to be based on the premise that the policy requirements superseded teachers' instructional decisions. In other words, teachers were expected to provide instruction in a manner consistent with policy expectations even if they believed another approach would be more appropriate in their local context. Some researchers on the other hand, have focused more on how these policies have been interpreted and pointed to the possibility that teachers' interpretations of policy shaped how they implemented policy requirements (Hajisoteriou, 2013) and suggested that misunderstanding resulting from those interpretations may lead to teacher actions that do not fit policy makers' intent (Wiley & García, 2016).

Investigating how the policy is conceived and implemented by teachers in Iranian high schools might be of great benefit specifically when there is a chance to both hear their statements about it and compare these statements with what is actually being done by them in classrooms. . Because firstly, knowing the real opinions and beliefs of teachers can open the way to make more practical policies closer to reality in the future. In addition, reaching a deeper and more accurate understanding of the mutual relationship between policies and teachers can play an important role in improving the situation of language education in schools, which means finding out where teachers stand in policies and what role policy plays in their teaching acts and how effective it is. For this purpose, it has been tried to do a detailed investigation on how teachers interpret the policies and then investigate how and to what extent they implement them in their daily teaching.

In so doing, this project attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the thematic characteristics of Iran's current policy documents regarding English language learning and teachers' roles in this regard?

2. What are the teachers' perceptions of policy requirements and expectations?

3. What are the possible matches or mismatches between current policy

documentation of teachers' roles in English education and their actual preferred values and beliefs in this regard?

3. Method

In this research, three main sets of data were examined: first, the official policy documents, second, the interviews conducted with the teachers, and finally, the observations made in the classrooms.

3.1 Four Main Policy Documents

The first data set which is investigated to illustrate officially stated overt policy directions comprises four national documents that lay educational policies or bear policy messages applicable to educational undertakings like ELT. The first set of data includes the following documents: The 20-year National Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran (National Vision 2005), The Comprehensive Science Roadmap (Comprehensive Roadmap 2009)**,** The National Curriculum Document (National Curriculum 2009)**,** The Fundamental Reform Document of Education (Reform Document 2011). Based on a qualitative content analysis approach, the full text of the documents are subjected to careful thematic analysis in search of notions directly or indirectly related to teachers' roles. Then the emerging themes are applied in delineating the official ELT policies traceable in these texts.

3.2 Ethnography

In recent times, LPP researchers have urged scholars to approach language policy research ethnographically to uncover the multitude of layers, especially at the micro level, that represent the interests and actions of all the stakeholders involved (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2013; Menken & García, 2010; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Ricento, 2006; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). In order to examine multilayers of classrooms, nine classes in nine secondary high schools in different cities of Iran were selected and observed. Three classes were in different areas of Tehran (one from a rather wealthier northern area, one from a less privileged southern, and one from a middle area in east). The other classes were two in Mazandaran (one in Babolsar and one in Sari), two in Kerman, and two others in Hamedan. These cities were chosen because the researchers had the possibility to stay and observe the classes in them. However, as the cities are from different parts of the country, although sampling of them could be considered as a convenience type, they can reflect an acceptable diversity of Iranian high schools.

To select the classes, an announcement was put in teachers' WhatsApp groups and they were invited to participate in the study. Among the interested teachers nine of them were selected randomly, though the number was not high. Each class was observed for six 1.5-hour sessions. Filming the classes was not allowed and the researcher was a passive observer who did not have any participation and just took notes.

3.3 Participants

The nine teachers were all females who had 8 to 16 years of teaching experience all in high schools. Five teachers had a bachelor's degree (all in English Teaching or Literature) and four of them a master's degree (3 in English and 1 in Management). One school in Tehran and one in Kerman were public and the others were private. The semi-structured interviews were conducted after class observations, all in Persian, recorded, transcribed, and explored using NVivo (12 Plus). The thematic patterns that emerged from the exploration of these interviews were considered

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 14, Number 1, Spring 2024, Page 1 to 14

along with the outcome of the exploration of the policy documents. The interface of these two streams of overt and covert policies and their comparison and contrast is the basis of the discussions presented in the following sections.

4. Results and Discussion .I

4.1. Policy documents regarding English language teachers and their roles

The examination of policy documents showed that "teacher credentials" and "academic content standards" are the two most common needs, expected from teachers. The thematic analysis of documents was done using NVivo (12 Plus) and particularly focused on the evaluation words and categories (These results are shown in Table 1). The followings are extracted categories illustrated by their frequency in all the four documents: appropriate (34.7%), scientifically-based (17.4%), adequate (11.3%), meaningful (10.4%), effective (10.2%), equal (9.7%), and accurate (6.3%). Each of these evaluation terms regarding teachers is analyzed in the following section.

Table 1 Frequency of thematic patterns in documents

Frequency (percent)	Thematic patterns
%٣٤,٧	appropriate
%١٧,٤	scientifically-based
%١١,٣	adequate
%١٠,٤	meaningful
%١٠,٢	effective
%٩,٧	equal
%٦,٣	accurate

Appropriate: Across all levels of policy papers, the evaluation phrase appropriate was the most regularly used term (34.7%). The policy documents stressed the importance of taking the necessary efforts to guarantee that English language (EL) students received services or help that fit their linguistic and academic needs. At all levels of government, policy requirements linked the identification of EL pupils to suitable EL education services delivered by competent teachers. The application of this assessment word (appropriate) to a specific policy need shaped the tone of policy language in addition to the number of times it was used. It means that wherever a specific need is mentioned, these words are emphasized to meet that need.

Scientifically-based: The second most prevalent assessment term used in the policy documents was the need for scientifically-based approaches to assessing and instructing EL pupils (17.4%), representing half as many segments as those in the appropriate code (34.7%). There was no explicit description for scientifically-based research unique to EL education in current policy papers, although there was a definition for doing research in terms of being able to read and write research papers. The terms "rigorous," "systematic," "objective," "empirical," "valid," and "peer-reviewed" were all used in the definition of reading research. For EL education, schools must employ "high-quality language instruction programs that are based on scientifically-based research demonstrating the effectiveness of the programs in increasing (A) English proficiency; and (B) student achievement in the core academic subjects".

Adequate: Teachers, programs, staff, and resources must all provide adequate services as part of the EL education policy standards. Approximately half of the uses of phrases like enough or sufficient or EL education programs reflected instructor needs. For example, current policy documents in Iran set the expectation that

professional development for teachers be "of sufficient intensity and duration" and that education leaders ensure school leaders have "adequately trained teachers to implement EL programs". The remaining uses of the terms were almost evenly divided among policy requirements related to assessment or accountability (13.9%), service decisions (13.9%), and communication with home (12.3%) on the part of teachers.

Effective: In addition to being appropriate and adequate, EL education policy demanded instructors to provide effective programs, tactics, and approaches to ensure EL students were able to meet policy goals. References to the success of EL education programs based on goals reached and broader references to teacher effectiveness were also included in the effective code. Assessment or accountability, as well as teacher engagement with parents, were other policy areas that crossed with parts of the effective code.

Meaningful and equal: The meaningful code includes nearly a tenth of the evaluation terms used in policy documents about Iranian English teachers and their roles. The word was frequently used to describe the expectation that teachers give students with meaningful educational experiences as a result of their involvement in programs and evaluations. The word was also used to describe contact with EL students' parents or guardians, albeit used less frequently. Despite not being synonymous with meaningful, the term equal was frequently used to describe a meaningful education. Teachers were required to give students equal educational opportunities, including "parity of participation" in public school programs, as part of the policy requirements.

4.2 ***Matches and mismatches between teacher-related policy documents and their policy interpretations***

4.2.1. Teachers' policy awareness

Before investigating the possible matches and mismatches between teacher-related policy documents and their policy interpretations, first it is useful to examine to what extent teachers are aware of policy. All the teachers present in the research were asked how much they knew about the policies and expectations of the policy makers, and then some of the expectations of the policy makers were presented to them and they were asked to what extent they knew about them. For example, when it was said that in addition to textbooks, they should also prepare and teach educational content appropriate to the students' specific culture, one of the teachers replied: "I didn't know this was mentioned in the policies, but anyway this was discussed in one of the in-service training courses at Farhangian University."

Although all the teachers stated that they were more or less aware of policy requirements, only some teachers additionally demonstrated that they were aware of recent policy modifications. However, several teachers talked on policy topics that were not covered in this study. The remaining codes covered 2.6% of all coded segments. The level of detail offered by teachers in their statements concerning policy requirements was also assessed. According to the findings, around one-fourth of teachers' policy statements did not include explicit requirement specifics, were of a broad nature, or expressed teachers' policy viewpoints.

Therefore, in general, it can be concluded that apart from the discussion of compatibility or non-compatibility between policies and teachers'

opinions, some of them do not have enough knowledge about policies, or if they do, it is not necessarily comprehensive and up-to-date. All in all, teachers' awareness of various aspects of educational policies and expectations from them can be divided into four categories: awareness about assessment and accountability, educational programs, in-service training, and teaching the content of textbooks.

As is shown in table 2, teachers seemed to be most aware of requirements relating to assessment and accountability (42.6% of their statements were related to this issue) with the majority of their statements focusing on subject assessments or accountability for student learning. After this, they mostly talked about language teaching programs, i.e. how to teach, how to manage the class, use of teaching aids, etc. (20.1%). After that, the category of in-service training was the most frequent (17.6%) and they mentioned issues such as participating in meetings, presenting reports and minutes of meetings. Finally, they emphasized the necessity of teaching the content of textbooks as their defined role in politics (17.1% of statements).

Table 2 The frequency of thematic patterns in teachers' conversations

Frequency (percent)	Thematic patterns
%٤٢,٦	assessment and accountability
%٢٠,١	EL education program requirements
%١٧,٦	ESL service requirements
%١٧,١	content instruction
%٢,٦	other cases

When teachers were asked how they learnt about specific policy criteria, they cited a variety of sources, ranging from specific people's names to broad comments about requirements from unknown sources. For example, teachers identified the lead ESL teacher as one source of policy information and in one case an amorphous policy information source was introduced "there is some magical guidebook that's online" and "[the pass score criteria is] pretty much everywhere." In general, experience, school, Department of Education, teachers, training, and unknown are the six pattern codes that teachers used to gather unknown information.

4.2.2 Alignment between teachers' policy interpretations and policy messages:

In the previous section, the content of the policy documents and the prominent themes in them related to the role of teachers were explained. When the teachers were asked what roles they thought the old and new documents and policymakers had defined for them and what they expected from them, teachers' reactions to current EL education policy in interviews were 71.2 % consistent with the policy messages described in the previous section. The replies of teachers differed slightly depending on the policy need. Teachers' responses about the required priority on English education coincided with policy messages, indicating that they were first expected to grant an "appropriate" and "effective" teaching[1]. "Appropriate and effective" are exactly two themes that are emphasized in the above

[1] It is necessary to explain that in some cases, the appropriate and effective may not be the exact words used by the teachers, but in any case, the words used have the same meaning or at least similar to these two words, and as a result, they are categorized in the subset of these two thematic patterns. The same story is true for other themes and thematic patterns discussed in this study.

documents in defining the role of teachers. For example they mentioned that the policy allowed native language use and did not ban teachers from using students' native language of course, only to the extent that the goal was better and more effective education. On the other hand, when teachers refer to the concept of "effective", they consider this concept in relation to evaluation, accountability and responsibility and educational programs (effective evaluation, effective accountability and effective programs). This point also shows the agreement between the documents and teachers' comments.

But the interesting thing here is that in the documents, research and approaches based on scientific research are classified as priorities, but none of the teachers mentioned this theme, perhaps because there is not much emphasis on this in the teacher training courses or it has not been discussed in the education directives. Or, as Abelardo et al. (2019) have pointed out, owing to inadequate trainings and seminars, heavy educational duties, lack of definition of a specific role for teachers to conduct research in school and busy personal life, teachers do not show any interest to conduct research.

The other rather mismatch was regarding the term "equal" which although emphasized by documents, was not mentioned by the teachers. One possible reason is that in their view the notion seems too obvious to be mentioned. The other reason might be that it had not been mentioned in their sources of information about policy since while they were answering the questions they seemed to be frequently reviewing these sources in their minds.

"Adequate" is indicated in the documents both in terms of service and education and also concerning teachers' training. In the first part (regarding service and education), there was a consistency between teachers' and documents' statements but there was a quite considerable point regarding the second part. Most of the teachers acknowledged the expectation to be adequately trained all the time but at the same time they stated that not all the training programs provided for them were necessarily useful or beneficial. They believed that some of these programs were planned just to play off the responsibility and were barely more than a waste of time.

4.3 Ethnographic account of the policy in the classroom

In this section, based on our ethnographic observations in the classrooms, some considerable points are mentioned. We did the observation to investigate the policy in the classroom, as well as how teachers interpreted and implemented the policy on a daily basis, and the conflicts they have while attempting to enforce it[2].

- **In all classes most of the time the teachers stuck only to the textbook provided by Department of Education which is most probably because they know that content instruction is an important issue mentioned in policy. Therefore, they do their best to teach the contents of these**

[۲] It should be noted that the order of presentation of these points has no special meaning and does not indicate their greater or lesser importance.

JOURNAL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE RESEARCH, Volume 14, Number 1, Spring 2024, Page 1 to 14

books in an adequate and appropriate manner.

In all classes teachers used Persian especially when the students seemed puzzled. Discussed later, the teachers stated that using the students' native language specifically while teaching grammar and new vocabulary can be quite beneficial and even necessary; if they are expected to give "appropriate instruction", Persian is of great help in this way. Moreover, saving time and supporting low-level students were two other reasons stated by teachers for using Persian. However, while the policy documents allow accommodations to use some Persian, teachers' use of Persian is probably more generous than the policy intended. It should also be mentioned that based on close observations, at least some teachers simply did not have enough proficiency to teach all the points, including grammar, in English and only when they taught the open-demonstration classes, did they exert a concerted effort to follow the policy documents. All in all, they seemed to use Persian for their own convenience and to maintain authority over their students.

There was a clear and considerable challenge for teachers in almost all classes. They had to deal with a rather broad range of proficiency levels. It is because some students have been abroad or studied in English institutes and some have not. This challenge makes the "equal and effective instruction" very difficult since, no matter what the teacher does, the class would be either too easy for some or too hard for other students.

Another challenge that existed in specially rather less privileged schools was that some students showed lack of motivation and interest during the class. Discussed later, the teachers mentioned family problems and/or mental issues like ADHD as the possible reasons. Anyway, even if teachers are quite aware of policy expectations, appropriate instruction is very difficult to be achieved with these students although some teachers said that they would give them some extra services out of class time.

After classes seven teachers said: "this is a real classroom" and when they were asked to clarify the statement, asserted that a real classroom is much more difficult and challenging than what the policy makers or authorities have in mind. They believed that in spite of all their efforts, because of the reality of the classrooms living up to all policy expectations is, if not impossible, at least too hard. In other words, as they stated, "some of the policy is worthwhile just in theory."

According to the teachers, in their recent meetings and training sessions formative assessment and assessment for learning had been emphasized and they were asked to apply these two types along with the usual summative assessment. That is why, also confirmed by themselves, about every other session they called the students to the front and asked them the previously taught content. It is remarkable that they publicly reprimanded weak students for low scores or not being able to answer simple questions. Discussed later, they asserted that it was not intended to shame them but to push them to make a stronger effort the next time, in the

words of one of them: "It's not a reprimand, it's a flick!"

All the teachers believed to some extent that considering the teachers' low pay grade the expectations demanded by policy makers and authorities were too much and what they did in class, regardless of the outcomes, was far too more than what they were paid for.

5. Conclusion

Teachers in the current study made sense of policy requirements based on information from others and their own experiences when they faced new demands. But the point is that first of all, they do not have a specific or commonly-used source of information about policy expectations. Teachers must be aware of policy requirements (Ade-Ojo, 2011) and accurately grasp policy requirements in order to appropriately and successfully apply policy, according to education researchers (Hajisoteriou, 2013; Jones, 2014) or even if there are shortcomings, they can compensate for them with their active and initiative actions (Rasti, 1400).

Moreover, even though policy has not been presented to them as a clear-cut, ready-made package, they are more or less aware of the generality of expectations and the roles defined for them. Regarding the details however, they show a substantial lack of knowledge and awareness. Thus, sometimes they might be aware of policy requirements and teach in a manner consistent with those requirements without explicitly knowing that such requirements are, in fact, part of education policy. In other words, teachers can act as unintentional policy implementers rather than intentional policy actors. This deficiency might be resulting from the fact that first, the officially stated positions regarding ELT in Iran are mostly policy segments rather than coherently structured policies. This may make it difficult to depict a clear image of what is to be achieved by the policy and, for example, what exactly *appropriate instruction* or *meaningful educational experiences* mean. Second, even within this tentatively stated policy, there seems to be a lack of concerted effort to create awareness of the policy expectations.

On the other hand, although there was a considerable consistency between teachers' statements and policy documents, at least regarding the teachers' roles, it seems that In-service teacher training classes, English language teacher preparation programs and the documents themselves have had little impact on the interpretation and implementation of policies because they do not have a comprehensive approach and cannot consider all aspects of teaching in real classes (Nemati and Mousazadeh, 1400). This issue is quite compatible with prior similar studies (e. g. Mirhosseini & Khodarahmi 2016; Mirhosseini, et al., 2021) but contrary to the expectations established in policy documents. This result reveals that the position of the English language in a context like Iran is significantly more complicated than the Foreign Languages Framework presented by the Iranian Ministry of Education and this is precisely the reason why Kheirabadi and Alavi Moghadam (2018) believe that in order to avoid uncertain interpretation of the national curriculum document, some kind of guide should be prepared and made available to teachers.

More than being influenced by the rules, dictated by policy, teachers have the ability to apply policy in their classrooms only as they see fit, according to much of the observations. While they assume that policy documents and authorities follow the interests of the government,

they seemingly try to put the learners' and their own benefits in top priority. As a result, when the policy expectations fit these benefits, they fulfill them but if there is a discrepancy between these benefits and expectations, they prefer to do what is *appropriate* for the learners and even for themselves. In the same way, some researchers concluded that ill-defined policy (Hajisoteriou, 2013), conflicting policy requirements (Roellke & Rice, 2008; Russell & Bray, 2013), or discrepancies between requirements and classroom realities (Grant et al., 2002; Greenfield et al., 2010; Hajisoteriou, 2013) resulted in teachers who did not implement policy according to policy makers' intentions or who did not implement policy under the conditions. This is consistent with what Kachru (1992, p.8) refers to as "invisible language planning," which is dictated by stakeholders' attitudes and expectations regarding a language, all of which were mentioned by interviewed participants as values and needs.

Overall, the results of this research suggest that the Iranian situation may give a complicated multipolar LPP environment. However, the possible missing links in ELT policies in Iran might be: constructing clear-cut and coherent ELT policies, increasing teachers' participation in decision making processes and making a channel for their voices to be heard, conveying the logic of official policies to frontline practice contexts, and improving the quality not the quantity of in-service teacher trainings that can fit the overwhelming size of their workload.

And finally, it should be mentioned that teachers understand what they are required to do under the new policies, but they are stumped as to how to handle the various tasks that have been placed on their shoulders. They are conflicted by opposing subjectivities in their local contexts. The findings of the study can surely speak for instructors who have faced and continue to face the problems and issues that come with policy changes and local expectations.

In the end, more research on schools in different cities of the country that can show teachers' opinions, especially in different cultural contexts, seems necessary. On the other hand, currently new policy makers have assumed the responsibility of planning and setting goals for language education in Iran. As a result, it will be undoubtedly fruitful to know their point of view. Finally, the language learners themselves and what exactly their goals and expectations from the new policy makers are, is another field of research which, if done, can improve the quality of education in the country.

References

Abelardo, L. J., Lomboy, M. A. A., Lopez, C. C., Balaria, F. E., & Subia, G. S. (2019). Challenges encountered by the national high school teachers in doing action research. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science (IJELS)*, *4*(4), 1046-1051.

Ade- Ojo, G. O. (2011). Practitioners' perception of the impact of the vision of policy-makers on practice: the example of the recommendations of the Moser Commission. *Research Papers in Education*, 26(1), 53-77.

Arani, A. M., Kakia, L., & Malek, M. J. (2018). Higher education research in Iran: Quantitative development and qualitative challenges. In J. Jung, H. Horta, & A. Yonezawa (Eds.), *Researching higher education in Asia: History, development,*

and future (pp. 315-326). Singapore: Springer.

Atai, M. R., & Fatahi-Majd, M. (2014). Exploring the practices and cognitions of Iranian ELT instructors and subject teachers in teaching EAP reading comprehension. *English for Specific Purposes*, *33*, 27-38.

Borjian. M. (2015). English in post-revolutionary Iran: From indigenization to internationalization. *Multilingua*. *34*.

Ebrahimi, F., & Sahragard, R. (2016). Some Insights into Iran's English Curriculum Based on Iran's Major Policies. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, *7*(5).

Esposito, J., Davis, C. L., & Swain, A. N. (2012). Urban educators' perceptions of culturally relevant pedagogy and school reform mandates. *Journal of Educational Change*, *13*(2), 235-258.

Greenfield, R., Rinaldi, C., Proctor, C. P., & Cardarelli, A. (2010). Teachers' perceptions of a response to intervention (RTI) reform effort in an urban elementary school: A consensual qualitative analysis. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, *21*(1), 47-63.

Hajisoteriou, C. (2013). Duty calls for interculturalism: how do teachers perceive the reform of intercultural education in Cyprus?. *Teacher development*, *17*(1), 107-126.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. Routledge.

Johnson, D. C. (2013). What is language policy?. In *Language policy* (pp. 3-25). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Johnson, D. C., & Ricento, T. (2013). Conceptual and theoretical perspectives in language planning and policy: Situating the ethnography of language policy. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *2013*(219), 7-21.

Jones, G. S. (2014). *Outcast London: a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian society*. Verso.

Kachru, B. B. (1992). World Englishes: Approaches, issues and resources. *Language teaching*, *25*(1), 1-14.

Kaplan, M. A. (1989). French in the community: A survey of language use abroad. *The French Review*, *63*(2), 290-299.

Kennedy, C. (2004). Challenges for language policy, language and development. *Dreams and realities: Developing countries and the English language*, 24-38.

Khany, R., & Tarlani-Aliabadi, H. (2016). Studying power relations in an academic setting: Teachers' and students' perceptions of EAP classes in Iran. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *21*, 72-85.

Lo Bianco, J. (2010). The importance of language policies and multilingualism for cultural diversity. *International Social Science Journal*, *61*(199), 37-67.

Menken, K., García, O., (2010). Stirring the onion: Educators and the dynamics of language education policies (looking ahead). In *Negotiating Language Policies in Schools* (pp. 263-275). Routledge.

Mirhosseini, S. A., & Khodakarami, S. (2016). Aspects of 'English language education'policies in Iran:'Our own beliefs' or 'out of who you are'?. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *11*(3), 283-299.

Mirhosseini, S. A., Tajik, L., & Bahrampour Pasha, A. (2021). Policies of English language teacher recruitment in Iran and a glimpse of their implementation. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1-19.

Narafshan, M. H., & Yamini, M. (2011). Policy and English language teaching (ELT) in Iran. *Iranian EFL journal*, *7*(5), 179-189.

Nero, S. J. (2014). De facto language education policy through teachers' attitudes and practices: A critical ethnographic study in three Jamaican schools. *Language Policy*, *13*(3), 221-242.

Pennycook, A. (2006). Postmodernism in language policy. *An introduction to language policy: Theory and Method*, 60-76.

Ramanathan, V., & Morgan, B. (2007). TESOL and policy enactments: Perspectives from practice. *Tesol Quarterly*, *41*(3), 447-463.

Riazi, A. (2005). The four language stages in the history of Iran. In Lin, A. M., Martin, P. (Eds.), Decolonization, globalization: Language-in-education policy and practice (pp. 98-114). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters

Ricento, T. (2000). Historical and theoretical perspectives in language policy and planning. *Journal of sociolinguistics*, *4*(2), 196-213.

Ricento, T. (2006). Language policy: Theory and practice–An introduction. *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method*, *10*, 23.

Rios-Aguilar, C., Gonzàlez Canchė, M., & Moll, L. (2012). Implementing structured English immersion in Arizona: Benefits, challenges, and opportunities. *Teachers College Record*, *114*(9), 1-18.

Roellke, C., & Rice, J. K. (2008). Responding to teacher quality and accountability mandates: The perspective of school administrators and classroom teachers. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *7*(3), 264-295.

Russell, J. L. & Bray, L. E. (2013). The dynamic interaction between institutional pressures and activity: An examination of the implementation of IEPs in secondary inclusive settings. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *40*(2), 243-266.

Schiffman, H., (2006). Language policy and linguistic culture. *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method*, 111-125.

Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. Routledge.

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.

Wiley, T. G., & García, O. (2016). Language policy and planning in language education: Legacies, consequences, and possibilities. *The Modern Language Journal*, *100*(S1), 48-63.

حقانی، نادر، قدوسی شاه نشین, الناز. (۱۳۹۸). بررسی مختصات سیاست‌های زبان خارجی کشور بر اساس چارچوب هورنبرگر. *نقد زبان و ادبیات خارجی*. 16(22), 37-58.

خیر آبادی, رضا, علوی مقدم, سید بهنام. (۱۳۹۸). فرصت ها و چالشهای فراروی آموزش زبان انگلیسی در نظام آموزش رسمی ایران. *پژوهشهای زبانشناختی در زبانهای خارجی*. 9(1), 53-70.

راستی، علیرضا. (۱۴۰۱). نگاهی نقّادانه به فرایند واژه‌گزینیِ فرهنگستان زبان و ادب فارسی در پرتو رهیافت سیاست‌گذاری و برنامه‌ریزی زبانی. *مطالعات زبان و ترجمه*. *50*(55), 66-89.

راستی, علیرضا. (۱۴۰۰). بررسی ماهیت و میزان بازتاب ارزش‌های قصد شده در برنامه درسی ملی ایران در کتاب‌های زبان انگلیسی *پژوهشهای زبانشناختی در زبانهای خارجی*.727-713 ,(4)11 .

کیانی, غلامرضا، مومنیان, محمد ,نویدی نیا، حسین. (۱۳۹۰). نگاهی دوباره به رویکرد برنامه درسی ملی نسبت به آموزش زبان‌های خارجی. *جستارهای زبانی*-0 ,(2)*2* 0.

نعمتی, مجید, موسی زاده, ام البنین. (۱۴۰۰). ارزشیابی از برنامه تربیت دبیر زبان انگلیسی در دانشگاه فرهنگیان : مطالعه سه بعدی مبتنی بر مدل CIPP. *پژوهشهای زبانشناختی در زبانهای خارجی*-763 ,(4)11 . 780.

ولی زاده، الهه. (۲۰۲۱) . جایگاه هویت ملی در طراحی سیاست‌های آموزشی در ایران. *ایران و چشم اندازهای تحلیلی امر سیاست*.