

We are grateful to the editors of the *OLBI Working Papers* for the privilege of leading this special thematic issue “Language policy: Reflections on research and its applications”.

The reflexive essays in this volume are extensions of a panel on the future of literacy studies, and an invited symposium on policy issues and language planning, held in Ottawa during the Spring of 2009 and 2010. This volume in two parts presents two editorials and seven essays, two in French and five in English, which reflect upon opening new discursive spaces on language policy as a field of study in general, and literacy of newcomers to Canada in particular.

The opening editorial discusses three issues that may help to grasp the interrelatedness of the articles in the volume: 1) Literacy as a new frontier of research for language policy; 2) The importance of literacy as a field for research and application of policy; and 3) The reconceptualization of the field of language policy in the light of recent advances in research and theory.

Three reflexive essays on current themes in Canadian adult literacy follow. Monika Jezak opens with an analysis of two contrasting but co-existing discourses on immigrant adult literacy in Canada and contextualizes them within Canadian public policy development, drawing our attention to a lack of congruence between the political aims and the actual literacy needs of the immigrants that may impact participation in Canadian society. Jean-Pierre Corbeil addresses the major elements that determine how language tests are used in large-scale national surveys, to better understand the distribution of literacy competencies in the population. In the third paper in this section, Marianne Kayed outlines the history and evolution of *Canadian Language Benchmarks/Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens*, the main political vehicle for providing language training to newcomers to Canada, as well as the upcoming revisions of this tool based on the results of a Canada-wide consultation.

The second part of this volume begins with Stacy Churchill’s invited address, which served as a starting point for the invited symposium on the future of public policy and language policy, where early career researchers gathered for an interdisciplinary dialogue. Churchill begins by setting the stage with a limited set of premises and an examination of terminology to clarify the broadening of the boundaries of language policy as a discipline. The new boundaries and terminology are then applied to demonstrate the rationale for pushing forward with language policy research in new domains, discussing the implications of redefining the field to deal with socially strategic issues for language policy research and its potential users.

The four reflective essays that follow are an extension of the discussions shared by the researchers at the invited symposium. Lowri Ahronson considers the importance of developing a holistic understanding of the factors that influence language choice and examines two periods of intense language policy and planning activity in Wales, and considers the kinds of research needed to further develop in the field of language policy and planning. Julie Byrd Clark, using her research as supporting evidence, details the critical need for a policy of heterogeneity in Canada, in light of the growing number of youth with multiple, overlapping, and complex identities and linguistic repertoires. Eve Haque examines recent developments in the field of policy studies in order to consider their applicability for the study of language policy and planning. Using an analysis of the activities of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism and its failure to give voice to the demands of Canada's indigenous peoples, she shows how Foucauldian insights into power and discourse offer the possibility of moving beyond the primarily descriptive nature of language policy studies and force a reconsideration of the premises upon which policy making is based. Finally, Sylvie A. Lamoureux, using higher education as a context, explores public policy and policy analysis in relation to language policy studies and argues for greater consideration of language issues in public policy and policy analysis.

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Enjoy!

Stacy Churchill, Monika Jezak and Sylvie A. Lamoureux

Guest Editors

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